Orientation 09: Survey Report

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1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this document is to summarise and interpret the data collected through the Orientation 09 Survey. The survey material was collected between 2 April and 17 April 2009 from first year commencing students. This is the first report of its kind and so no previous data is available for comparison. The information in this report is designed to supplement data obtained from the Orientation Web report and the SWOT report on activities.

1.1 Intended audience

The intended audience of the report includes:

- SWOT Project Committee
- Faculty staff
- Student Support services staff
- University of Sydney Union representatives
- First Year Experience Working Party members
- Other staff members who organize or take part in orientation programs

2. Background

The Orientation 09 survey has been undertaken at the request of the SWOT Project Committee (See http://www.usyd.edu.au/stuserv/committees/swotpg.shtml for group membership and terms of reference). The Committee meets twice yearly to discuss and plan for the University (faculty and student support services) Orientation and Transition program. Orientation activities include the University Welcome, Faculty Welcomes, Skills for Success seminars and workshops, Library tours and ICT lab sessions. Orientation activities run alongside the USU organized O-Week social events and campus tours.

The SWOT program addresses the many transitional needs of new students when beginning at university. SWOT aims to enhance the overall student experience with transition workshops, seminars and information sessions which also allows students to meet with their peers, or who are in a similar demographic profile (mature age, part-time, international or rural students).

Research suggests “students who are welcomed and connected to the University will flourish and develop academically and socially” (Emmitt, Callaghan, Warren & Postill, 2002, p.1). The range of activities the SWOT program offers aims to enhance transition, to assist students identify and develop academic and social skills appropriate to tertiary level study, and to develop a sense of connectedness with the University.

From existing research, and the results of our survey, it is evident that new students desire to succeed on an academic as well as a social level upon commencing university. “In particular, students benefit from being able to interact with fellow students and academics in connection with their studies” (Pascarella & Terenzini,

The SWOT program fosters an integrated, campus-wide approach to encourage a sense of belonging amongst new students. The faculties, library and central support services work side by side to assist students to adjust successfully.

Promoting a collegial environment and encouraging a sense of belonging has been identified as a key factor in institutions that are particularly successful in retaining students (Yorke, 2001, cited in Jardine, 2005, p.25). It has also been identified within the Australian context as being significant in student satisfaction especially where the interaction was with their peers within the learning community. (Krause, McInnis & Welle, 2002, cited in Jardine, 2005, p.25)

Programs such as ‘Adapting to life at Sydney’ and ‘Making friends and contacts’ gives new students an opportunity to become familiar with their new environment, meet new people and gain knowledge and skills to optimize their university experience. As the majority of first year students are school leavers they are entering an unfamiliar institution, and have to make academic, social and cultural adjustments in order to experience university life in a positive way:

Students in their first year have special learning needs arising from the social and academic transition they are experiencing. From multiple starting points, all students are on a journey to becoming self-managing or self-directed learners and the first-year curriculum must help them get there. (Kift & Nelson, 2005, p.229)

The SWOT program invites students to explore all facets of student life. It develops an awareness of, and encourages, independent learning by providing access to resources which will help make the transition process smoother and less stressful. Such programs have been proven to be an important part of the adjustment to tertiary study.

If students are to be assisted in coping with stress associated with academic concerns during the transition period between secondary school and university, they need to learn about productive coping strategies in relation to dealing with academic concerns…Such assistance for students would be most effective prior to and immediately following the commencement of their first academic semester. Such timely intervention may encourage the students to develop self reliance more quickly and thus reduce their level of stress associated with academic concerns at the beginning of first semester. (Jones & Frydenberg, 2000, p.91)

The SWOT Project Group requested the survey, to:

1. Expand pathways of feedback from students, and
2. Use student feedback to enhance program planning and delivery.
The Committee appointed a sub-group who worked collaboratively to design, develop, distribute and analyse the survey.

2.1 Data collection and approval

The survey was designed on Survey Monkey and an email was sent to all newly commencing students (approx 5,500). Internal Communications approved the email and the Deputy Registrar approved the survey. As incentive for taking part in the survey, students were offered the chance to win a $250 Co-op Bookshop gift voucher. The Office of General Counsel approved the use of a ‘gratuitous lottery’ and compiled the terms and conditions for the survey.

See Appendices A and B for the survey questions and email to students.

Students were asked for demographic information, to identify which activities they had attended, to respond whether attending the Orientation impacted on their adjustment to university, and free text questions regarding the Orientation program. The response rate was approximately 20% with 1148 students taking part in the survey (and 1100 students fully completing the survey). The survey ran from 2 April to 17 April 2009. A student who completed the survey was selected at random and notified of their win on 20 April 2009.
3. Survey Summary – Quantitative Data

3.1 Demographic information

The following is a representation of the demographic data collected from the survey. The majority of respondents were aged between 17 and 18 years, were female, local and enrolled full-time.

Graph 1: Demographic information
3.2 Faculty representation

The Faculty of Arts was the most highly represented student cohort in the survey, with 38% of respondents from Arts, followed by Science (23.1%), and then Economics and Business (17%), consistent with the first year intake profile.

The majority of students from each faculty attended on the day of their faculty’s welcome and activity/excursion days
3.3 Events attended

The following graph outlines the events most attended by students:

Graph 3: Orientation events attended

Note: The SOAR and Mature Age welcomes were invitation only events targeting a much smaller cohort than the other open events. The low number of students attending ICT sessions is discussed in section 4.5.

The majority of students reported attending their Faculty Welcome (79.6%). The University Welcome, Succeeding at Sydney talks, Careers talks and Library tours were also popular.

3.4 Advertising and promotion

Promotion of the SWOT program consists of a postcard at in-person enrolment; direct mailout of the SWOT booklet to all local commencing undergraduate students and through the International Student Daily Arrival sessions. The booklet was also available at the USU ACCESS tents and SPOC students, and as a downloadable pdf through the SWOT/Orientation website.
The Orientation splash page promoted both the SWOT and USU program. The banner for the Orientation page was placed on the University home page, and on Services for Students and Faculty home pages.

Students reported receiving information about SWOT from a number of sources.

Graph 4: Penetration of publicity

Most students received information about SWOT through the University home page, where a button linked students to the Orientation 09 website (which then directed students to the SWOT and O-Week websites). This was followed by enrolment day where SWOT postcards were handed out to all newly enrolling students. Interestingly, the SWOT booklet, which is mailed out to all newly enrolled local first year students, ranked 5th compared with other sources, and the SWOT website (www.swot.usyd.edu.au) ranked 7th.

Other comments from students included finding out from Facebook. These referred to the Mature Age student Facebook page, which was set up by the USU following the success of previous years’ Mature Age Welcomes. Students also referred to information received in the mail and word of mouth through family members and colleges.
3.5 Meeting student needs

Students were asked to rank a number of statements to indicate if SWOT had helped their transition to university. Choice of these statements was informed by the transition research.

Graph 5: Meeting student needs

Overall students ranked their sense of connectedness and belonging to the university very highly (70.3% Agree or Strongly Agree) as well as feeling more comfortable on campus (84.5% A or SA). The majority of students answering the survey felt they were able to find their way around campus, locate the library, and be aware of sources of support on campus as a result of the Orientation program.

Over 63% of students did not agree that attending Orientation enabled them to meet academic staff, despite the majority of students attending their faculty welcome. The majority of students did not agree that attending orientation enabled them to identify academic skills for success (63.5%). This is consistent with the responses to the free text qualitative data, where the Skills for Success and academic components of the program were reported as being hidden behind the ‘carnival’ atmosphere of the USU social activities.
4. **Survey summary – Quantitative Data**

The qualitative data consisted of over 1700 answers to 3 free text questions. An analysis of these answers is provided in this section. Students indicated that they found their Orientation experience enjoyable and useful. However, a significant proportion of students did not, as discussed below. Many students still had questions or concerns and their comments were negative.

The following discussion has been divided around 7 themes. These are based on the focus of students feedback:

4.1 Faculty welcomes

4.2 Meeting People:
    4.2.1 Mentoring programs
    4.2.2 Other Students
    4.2.3 Staff

4.3 Information workshops

4.4 Library

4.5 ICT

4.6 Administrative issues

4.7 USU’s O-Week activities
    4.7.1 Advertising & Promotions
    4.7.2 Clubs & Society stalls
    4.7.3 Events & Entertainment
    4.7.4 Free giveaways
    4.7.5 SPOCS
    4.7.6 Tours
    4.7.7 Atmosphere

*Qualitative questions and response count:*

‘What were the best aspects of Orientation?’ – 735 answers

‘What aspects were most in need of improvement?’ – 596 answers

‘Do you still have any questions or issues you need to clarify about beginning uni?’ - 413 answers
4.1 FACULTY WELCOMES

A significant proportion of students made comments regarding their faculty welcome, and, overall, found they were an important part of Orientation in terms of feeling connected and familiar with the university.

Positive comments included faculty welcomes assisting students to meet people who were in the same/similar course -thus positively contributing to their sense of belonging and connectedness, as well as being able to obtain useful and relevant information from older students who participated in their welcomes. Students indicated they were relieved to make contact with the academic staff, and their nerves were eased as they were given useful information about their degree. These faculty welcomes also helped students orientate themselves in a new environment, and as one student stated it accentuated the “significance of being at university and beginning a degree.”

Students also commented on feeling disconnected from their faculty’s welcome and other students. Additional, information to consider to enhance the welcomes could include: more course information, information about workload, text book lists and tips on transitioning, in built mechanisms to meet with fellow students, senior students and academic staff who will be primary contacts for students as they begin their studies.

4.2 MEETING PEOPLE

Having the opportunity to meet other students was continually raised in the qualitative data. All student groups - school leavers, mature-age and international students commented on the loneliness and alienation they felt during SWOT and on beginning university. Student comments focused on three main areas – mentoring programs, meeting other students and meeting staff.

4.2.1 Mentoring Programs

Students indicated that faculty mentoring programs assisted them in meeting new people and making new friends within their faculty, thus easing their anxiety and contributing to a smooth transition into the university environment.

“Meeting up with my mentor group, knowing that I would know people on the first day of uni made it a little less daunting.”

Students gained essential information about university life: what was expected of them as a first year student, their course structure, and basic tips for commencing university. As such, negative comments from students indicated they were disappointed to miss out due a lack of advertising. Students also requested stronger mentoring programs, which allowed continued contact between mentors and new students throughout the year.
Students also requested more information from mentoring groups, including subject content and structure. Others suggested ‘working through’ O-Week in their mentor groups in order to “…facilitate friendships…since that comes easier in smaller and more ‘secure’ groups, and [would] help with the transition to university life. Networks and friends are important factors for a successful student life, but not necessarily easy to obtain.”

4.2.2 Other students

Students made positive comments about Orientation providing an opportunity to meet new people from their faculty and through the variety of events and activities on offer.

“Being able to relax and getting to know some of the people that I was going to be working with in the faculty. The environment created by O-Week facilitated this really well.”

Other positive comments included being able to connect with friends from high school, and being introduced to other students from different countries. Mature age students found that their evening welcome seminar “…allowed me to [make] contact with other mature-age students…I was more comfortable about commencing study after this event.”

However, due to the large student population, many students felt disconnected from university life. Students who did not have a mentoring program to attend found it difficult to meet others and feel connected throughout Orientation. Students were dissatisfied with the lack of structured activities to help them connect with people who were in the same course/class.

“There needs to be more ‘get-to-know-people’ activities. A lot of people drop out because they feel so lonely. The only reason I’m staying is because I know in about a year or two I’ll stop feeling [this] way. But if you haven’t had that experience [of meeting people] it’s hard just to go off someone’s word that it’ll stop. It’s really alienating.”

4.2.3 Staff

There was a strong indication of students’ need to connect with academic staff in order to feel a sense of belonging in the university community. Staff were said to be “approachable”, “friendly”, and “had a willingness to help.” Students indicated a gratefulness at the chance to meet with and speak to the academic staff at their faculty orientation sessions. This eased students’ nerves about starting lectures and tutorials in the first few weeks.

Conversely, there was significant level of dissatisfaction with the lack of academic presence and lack of connectedness with staff at some faculty welcomes.

“We didn’t get a chance to meet academic staff. Well, just a snippet for the introduction to the course but after that it’s as if they just vanished.”
4.3 SWOT INFORMATION WORKSHOPS:

The survey indicated students were aware of a need to learn about and develop new research and academic writing skills, and to competently use the resources available to them for academic success. Students found value in the Skills for Success and Balancing Life and Learning sessions. As the survey was conducted in week five, the comments suggest that these workshops made an impact on students’ first year experience.

“I liked the way they combined lots of sessions together.”

“They gave basic advice to help with the transition from high school to university.”

“[It] was a great resource and really helped me get back in the swing of things.”

Negative responses indicated that they wanted more involvement within the sessions, and greater awareness of the program.

[The Collaborative learning session] should have been more about how to assert yourself in different situations...challenges you might encounter in group work scenarios, etc.”

“I think more publicity about the academic help programs...O-Week mainly focused on the joining of clubs and societies and so I was not aware of the other programs that were held during the week.”

Students wanted a more detailed outline of SWOT activities so they could make informed decisions about the benefits of attending, along with more seminars and workshops due to clashes in the timetable (e.g. faculty welcomes and USU events). Mature-age students commented on the shortage of activities and programs designed specifically for their demographic. International students found the language barrier difficult, with one student suggesting there could be more visual assistance to aid comprehension and understanding. Overcoming feelings of disconnectedness and isolation through these seminars was seen as important.

4.4 LIBRARY:

The need for more information and assistance on effective use of library resources was raised, with students commenting they were still uncertain about which library to use for their course in Week 5. Students felt that the library tours were not advertised well and also requested more tours throughout the semester. Students commented that they were not focused on finding out how to use the library during the Orientation period.

“The computer and library sessions could be repeated in the first few weeks of semester. I know a few others who did not go to these because there was no immediate need but looking back they would have been quite useful for us.”

Positive comments consisted of student’s writing ‘library tours’ in the free text question about the best aspects of orientation. Many students also wrote ‘tours’, but did not qualify if they were referring to library or campus tours.
4.5 ICT

The main focus of feedback about the Information Technology and Communications was the limited amount of support for resources such as MyUni. One student commented that MyUni “wasn’t explained as much as needed, and [I] later realised it was very crucial.” Other students found WebCT to be inefficient, and needed clearer explanations of how to navigate the site.

Stress and confusion about computer resources made students feel unprepared. Running computer information sessions through the first semester was seen as important. There were some complaints on the lack of computers available during peak periods. Increasing the visibility of the ICT information during orientation and the first few weeks of semester, and highlighting the importance of early mastery could assist student adjustment to online resources and the learning environment.

4.6 ADMINISTRATION AND TIMETABLEING:

The last question asked students if they still needed to clarify anything before starting uni and a large number of responses were received. Concerns about administrative issues were raised consistently, including HECS, when/where/how to pay semester fees upfront, the best options in terms of paying fees, where to change your enrolment/timetable and how to apply for a scholarship. Students also wanted more information about the formal processes, such as applying for special consideration and planning their units. It seemed there was a large amount of ‘assumed knowledge’ that students found difficult to obtain or comprehend.

“Students need to be told things which may appear simple...how to change units of study and swap them...otherwise people can feel uncomfortable, as I did at first.”

“Maybe provide some information to first years about how to read their timetable [to decipher the acronyms]...OTC...Old Teacher’s College.”

Students found access to staff and obtaining useful information from faculty and administrative services very difficult. This made the process of finding information more arduous than necessary. Some of these pressures could have been alleviated by improvements to information on university websites.

“Hard getting help selecting the right course during orientation and the following weeks...reading the handbook was not as useful as actually asking someone.”

“There could be just one web page with information for different types of concerns. For example, I knew all the various types of information was available on the website, but I found that too many links was confusing. One page for current students should direct us everywhere, e.g. support, MyUni, information about exams, information about units of study, academic honesty, etc.”
Students indicated that more detailed information on the university website would “ease staff pressure” during this busy period, as many students are finding it difficult to obtain face-to-face help with their enquiries.

Students also were confused about the semester dates and when assignments are due. However, they did appreciate that they could obtain their timetable during Orientation. It made them feel more comfortable and secure about starting the semester. Another benefit was the chance to change their timetable during this period. “The timetabling volunteers were also beneficial.” This seemed to ease the stress and anxiety that students could have potentially faced.

### 4.7 USU

The survey collected 1744 free text answers from students, and over 840 responses were related to USU activities. This figure does not include the 156 free-text answers in direct response to Question 7 which asked students to comment specifically on the USU events and activities.

Responses regarding the USU program fit into seven main categories. As with the SWOT related feedback, positive and negative comments were somewhat contradictory.

#### 4.7.1 Advertising & Promotion

Students commented that advertising for O-Week was sufficient, and marketing for the ACCESS card was effective.

“[The ‘Friends with Benefits’ promoters] was a great way of urging students to buy one (it sure worked for me!).”

However, other comments on this issue emphasised a lack of advertising for events and activities, as well as stall locations. Students wanted more advertising regarding the various clubs and societies and what they offered, as well as the cost of joining. Several students found “persistent group endorsers” irritating, and expressed concern regarding the large numbers of pamphlets and flyers that ended up in the bin.

#### 4.7.2 Clubs & Society stalls

Students indicated they enjoyed visiting the clubs and society stalls (with 258 positive comments received). Students said they enjoyed the carnival-like ambience, as it made it “lively and engaging.” The stalls also gave students the opportunity to “hang out…in a relaxed way before starting the semester.” The students who ran the stalls were key in easing nerves and making the new student group feel accepted into the community:

“Talking to students at each club/society stall about tips on succeeding at uni and transitional feedback [was the best aspect of Orientation] ...This helped me understand what to expect as a new student. It was an important part in my personal preparation entering university.”
Students said they were able to meet new people who shared the same interests which help to make “me feel really welcome and connected to the university.” However, a large number of students commented on the area being too overcrowded, which led to the environment being chaotic, intimidating and overwhelming. Other comments included lines being too long and the layout of the stalls. Suggestions included having the stalls in sequential order to make them easier to navigate. The commercial ‘vibe of O-Week was also commented on.

“Too much of what encompasses O-Week is primarily commercially motivated. Perhaps there should be more non-profit clubs and student services, as the feeling of being consumer first, student second is somewhat alienating.”

Complaints regarding the expensive membership fees also featured in responses, and many were displeased that they had to purchase an ACCESS card to join many clubs and societies.

4.7.3 Events & Entertainment

The student population was impressed with the variety of events and activities they could choose from, as this “helped with the transition”, and many enjoyed the live entertainment and the bands throughout the day: “The bands and competitions provided a sense of community spirit.”

Students emphasised the importance of being able to meet new people through these activities, again highlighting the importance of making friends throughout the Orientation period. A number of students indicated that some events should be run multiple times, “since sometimes you had to choose between events, and so missed out on some things.” Whilst others said: “Don’t repeat activities – people become disinterested and won’t come every day.”

Students under 18 expressed concern that they could not attend the night events whilst others said there should be more rides, music and night events offered. Mature Age students also commented that there were not enough for them to take part. They felt that they didn’t fit in with the types of events the USU ran.

Food and beverages were consistently commented on as an area for improvement. The quality of food, lack of diversity and high prices were raised.

4.7.4 Free giveaways

The majority of student commenting on freebies, said they were the ‘best’ aspect of orientation, particularly the free food and beverages: “Free food is always a plus, as students such as myself are a bit short of money!”

However, other students felt there should be more: “free drinks should be distributed, as it was quite hot during the day”. Students also requested more free activities to participate in.
4.7.5 SPOCS

SPOCS were described as “honest”, “friendly”, “positive” and said to act with enthusiasm. “They gave clear and direct instructions”, making the orientation experience easier, and students “were made to feel comfortable in a new environment.” Conversely, it was suggested that more SPOCS were needed, and they need to be much more recognisable as points of contact: “I just assumed they were advertising a society.” It was suggested that SPOCS needed a broader range of training and needed to be more approachable.

“Timetabling, information about faculties, and where to change your enrolment – this information should be sent to the volunteers as well so that people don’t constantly get misguided and told incorrect information about where to go.”

“The SPOCS...were impossible to find and when they were located they were busy socialising with themselves. They weren’t seen walking around, approaching people when they were lost.”

4.7.6 Tours

The comments below were generally about ‘tours’ and it was not indicated if students meant SWOT or USU-run tours. Students enjoyed being shown around the university by current students, and were provide with “loads of information about the facilities…it helped a lot during my first few weeks at uni.” However, others had greater expectations from the tours saying that more effort should be made in the organization and execution of the tours, such as having designated small-group tours for students, with “a free BBQ...and drinks for everyone” at the conclusion of the tour. Parallels were drawn with other universities which provided additional group activities and free drinks after the tours.

Students enjoyed and appreciated personal interaction and efforts made by the university volunteers that conduct the tours, as it helped them to feel welcomed and at ease. Students noted that large tour groups were not conducive to gaining a comprehensive introduction to a university environment and that the tours should be run earlier in the day for first year students so they become familiar with their surroundings sooner thus feeling more comfortable.

4.7.7 Atmosphere

Students commented on the helpful, friendly, enthusiastic and welcoming atmosphere from everyone participating in O-Week. They commented on the “community feel” and as previously mentioned, several students expressed their enthusiasm for the ‘carnival-like’ atmosphere O-Week presented.

“...the stalls, dodgem cars, fairy floss, show bags...[it] was a fun way to become acquainted with the university.”

“The atmosphere definitely got me pumped to start uni.”
A few negative comments reflected on O-Week not being indicative of university life:

Although the atmosphere was lively and exciting, as a whole it seemed to be fairly artificial – uni life is nothing like the way O-Week presents it to be (with the colours, the food, the demonstrations, etc). It made it seem so exciting and bright but none of it is actually there in day-to-day life. Perhaps it could be toned down a bit).

Students wanted a genuine and honest O-Week experience which encompassed a sense of fun as well useful academic and administrative guidance.
5. CONCLUSION

The SWOT program was developed in response to past research into the first year experience, and the needs of first year students at the University of Sydney. It aims to engage with the orientation and transition needs of new students through workshops, seminars and information sessions, and strives to promote a sense of belonging within the university environment. Our results indicate that many students were happy with the assistance provided through SWOT in helping them adjust to the new learning environment. However, there was consistent feedback suggesting students were not fully satisfied with the experience. This is due to a number of factors as discussed below.

Students commented that the SWOT program was not advertised widely enough. The promotion of the program should be engaging and enticing as the academic and support activities were consistently lost behind the larger and more visually present USU O-Week activities.

The Orientation period was not identified as the most useful period for library and computer sessions, with students asking for these to be run throughout first semester. Students also suggested that more detailed guidelines about why they should attend SWOT activities would ensure that they didn’t miss out on vital information.

There was little understanding of the differences between SWOT and O-Week, shown through the general nature of the comments provided by students. Over half of the free text answers related directly to USU activities. These two factors made it difficult to fully assess SWOT as a stand-alone program, but did highlight the need for a greater awareness of the differences between the two programs.

The chance to meet other students was a consistent focus for students, including more opportunities to meet older students who could provide advice and guidance as to what to expect. A more structured mentoring system was requested by many students, along with lengthening mentoring programs to span the first semester. Students indicated they felt uneasy and alone if they did not have the chance to get to know others in the same position.

The comments directly relating to the SWOT program were 50% positive and 50% negative, indicating that a more in depth analysis is needed. Students’ free text comments also seemed to contradict the high rankings in the quantitative data gathered from the quantitative data. For example, students indicated they were made to feel welcome and gained a sense of connectedness to the university through Orientation activities. However, they also identified greater needs beyond this, such as meeting people and developing a broader understanding of how SWOT activities could assist them.

In regards, to the USU activities and events the sway was 70% positive and 30% negative. The highest number of comments about any aspect of Orientation was the USU clubs and societies stalls, with 80% of those comments being positive. It is also worth noting that many students simply wrote ‘freebies’ in the question referring to the ‘best aspect of orientation.’ Perhaps indicating again that SWOT activities, and
the academic and social preparedness that SWOT provides, were not being recognized.

To gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which we can improve the student experience through SWOT, it would be helpful to conduct focus groups to drill down into student comments and further explore the contradictory comments. Moreover, it would be useful to obtain more information about student expectations on commencing university for the first time, and to receive feedback on specific parts of the branding and promotion of SWOT.

The feedback provided in this survey has been a useful tool in helping us to understand the SWOT program and how it is, or isn’t, meeting the specific needs of the first year cohort. The material provided here will lead to a more focused approach to ensure that the student’s needs are consistently met through this program.
6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Each faculty should have a structured peer mentoring program to assist students in meeting new people and to make new friends within their course. The initial mentoring contact should be early in the SWOT program to allow students to participate in orientation activities as a cohort. The ongoing mentoring program should be structured to allow mentors and first year students to meet regularly throughout the year for ongoing advice and support. Finally, the content presented in the mentoring groups needs to be relevant, timely, and targeting student needs.

2. Greater access to academic staff is needed during the orientation period to help students feel a sense of belonging, and to establish a good rapport with their future lecturers and tutors. This increase in staff presence will also provide an opportunity for students to ask specific questions regarding their course.

3. The use of student ambassadors to promote Student Administration and Support services during faculty welcomes, residential colleges and other seminars normally undertaken by Counselling Service staff. This ensures that students have peer-oriented contact as requested throughout the survey feedback.

4. Repetition of key skills of success and information sessions to increase access for students. As well as consolidating seminars and information sessions into one location, to facilitate student entry, cross promotion of events, and marketing.

5. Increased promotion for SWOT sessions during the program given the high level of focus on USU-related activities at this time. Promotional materials could include pull-up banners, flags and gate posters to draw attention to SWOT. It may also be constructive to use the student ambassadors to promote the SWOT programs on campus grounds throughout the week, alongside USU promoters.

6. Identifying, through the focus groups and other research, how students connect with promotional material and in particular the SWOT booklet and website. The SWOT promotional material needs to eye-catching and informative so that students engage with it and are adequately informed of the program. Moreover, so they can understand how the activities will assist their transition to tertiary study, and to becoming independent learners.
**APPENDIX A**  
Orientation 09 Survey Questions

**1. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the survey**

Please tick the box below if you agree to the Conditions of Entry for this survey. By agreeing to participate you will be automatically entered into the draw for a chance to win a $250 Co-op Bookshop voucher.

* 1. I agree to participate in this survey and to be entered into the draw
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

**2. Thank you!**

Thank you! If you would like to participate in the Orientation 09 Survey for a chance to win a $250 Co-op Bookshop voucher, please read the Conditions of Entry and enter the survey again through your email.

**3. Information about you**

* 1. Please tell us a bit about you. Are you...? (tick as many as apply)
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female
   - [ ] Local Student
   - [ ] International Student
   - [ ] Full time
   - [ ] Part time
   - [ ] Mature Age
   - [ ] Rural student

**4. Information about you**

1. What age group are you?
   - [ ] 17-18 years
   - [ ] 19-21
   - [ ] 22-25
   - [ ] 26-36
   - [ ] 37 +
2. What Faculty are you from?
   - [ ] Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
   - [ ] Arts
   - [ ] Economics and Business
   - [ ] Education and Social Work
   - [ ] Engineering and Information Technologies
   - [ ] Health Sciences
   - [ ] Pharmacy
   - [ ] Science
   - [ ] Sydney College of the Arts
   - [ ] Sydney Conservatorium of Music
   - [ ] Veterinary Science

3. Did you come to Orientation 09 (23-27 February)?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

5. Didn’t attend Orientation?

1. Please tell us why you did not come to Orientation 09 (tick as many as apply)
   - [ ] Didn’t know about the program
   - [ ] Couldn’t take time off work
   - [ ] Was out of Sydney on holidays
   - [ ] Hadn’t arrived in Sydney yet
   - [ ] The program did not look interesting/relevant to me
   - [ ] Attended my residential college orientation instead
   - [ ] Attended my campus orientation (SCA, CON, FHS) instead

Other (please specify):

6. Your experience of Orientation 09

We are interested in what events you attended, how useful you found these events, and what we could do to improve the Orientation experience.
1. How did you hear about the Orientation 09 program? (tick as many as apply)
   - University of Sydney Home page
   - Faculty Home page
   - On enrolment day
   - START website
   - SWOT postcard
   - SWOT website
   - USU O-Week website
   - SWOT booklet
   - USU O-Week brochure
   - Word of mouth
   - Other (please specify)

2. Which days of the program did you attend? (tick all that apply)
   - Friday 20 Feb
   - Monday 23 Feb
   - Tuesday 24 Feb
   - Wednesday 25 Feb
   - Thursday 26 Feb
   - Friday 27 Feb

3. Which events did you attend?
   - Faculty Welcome
   - University Welcome (Great Hall)
   - Succeeding at Sydney talks and Info sessions
   - SOAR Welcome
   - Mature age welcome
   - Careers talks and information sessions
   - Library tours
   - ICT lab sessions

7. USU O-Week events

We are also interested in the O-week social activities you may have attended
1. How many clubs and societies did you join?
- None
- 1
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 5+

2. Did you attend any of the night time events? and if so, how would you rate them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Didn't go</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Star Struck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer of Love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big O</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any comments about the night events?

3. Did you find there was always something to participate in during O-Week?
- Yes
- No

Any Comments?

4. Did you find the SPOC’s (O-week Volunteers) Useful for providing information and directions?
- Yes
- No
- Didn’t know about them

8. Your Transition to Uni

Please tell us if attending Orientation 09 helped you to get to know the uni and to meet fellow students.
1. Did attending Orientation 09 help you to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meet fellow students</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet academic staff</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify academic skills for success</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find my way around the campus</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locate the library</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify and set up computer resources</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become aware of sources of support on campus</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel more comfortable on campus</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enjoy my first few weeks at Uni</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel connected to the Uni</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel as though I belong at the Uni</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Your feedback on the program

Please feel free to provide feedback about the Orientation program. We are keen to hear about what worked well, and where we can improve.

1. What were the best aspects of Orientation 09?

2. What aspects are most in need of improvement? Any suggestions?

3. Do you have any questions or issues you still need to clarify about beginning at Uni?

10. Thank You!

Thank you!
APPENDIX B
Email to Students

Subject: Complete the Orientation 09 Survey for a chance to win a $250 voucher

Dear Student

From 23 to 27 February, the University of Sydney held Orientation 09 combining social, academic, library, IT and student support events design to assist you in making a successful transition to Uni.

We are now conducting a survey to find out what you thought about Orientation 09.

We are keen to find what events you attended, how helpful they were and whether there are any improvements you can recommend for future programs.

Even if you did not make it to Orientation 09, we would also love to hear from you, to find out why you did not come, and how we can make the program more accessible to everyone.

Click here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=BAq8xQqAhLO4x9prBoXR_2feNbYicEH08OPMaHjR4rLnw_3d to complete the anonymous survey which will take about 5 minutes.

You will also be automatically entered into the draw for a $250 Coop Bookshop gift voucher.

Thanks for taking the time to participate. We value your feedback.

Regards,
Jordi Austin
SWOT Project Group Convenor

https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx
REFERENCE LIST


