Orientation Committee Year End Report - 2006

2006 Orientation Committee Members

- Mary Beth Worrilow, Co-chair
- Deb Detzel, Co-chair
- Susan Coakley (term expired June 2006)
- Jan Lefebvre
- Grant Wolf
- Chris Wolf
- Ken Hyde (S Contract)
- Mary Long (S Contract)

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The Orientation Committee dedicates its time to providing ELI students with enriching cultural and social activities to increase one’s understanding of American culture. We are committed to bringing fun and exciting events to our students, so that they may find the balance between their academic and social lives while engaging in cross-cultural communication. Each session guarantees the student one free trip to a nearby metropolitan city such as New York, Washington DC, Philadelphia or Baltimore, in addition to at least three other social activities.

SUMMARY OF THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED THIS YEAR.

Following is a list of the social activities proposed, decided, planned, and offered by the Orientation Committee in 2006.

Orientation Activities for 2006

Session III’06
January/ Feb:
- Ice Skating Party
- Ski Trip to Blue Mountain
- Optional NYC Trip
- Optional DC Trip
- First ever Culture Café: Korea
- Rapid Dating
- Culture Café: Brazil
- Intramurals

Session IV ‘06
March/April:
- Ice Skating Party
- Culture Café: Saudi Arabia
- Culture Café: Taiwan
- Trip to Washington D.C.
- Intramurals Soccer and Volleyball
- Off-campus Community Outreach Event at St. Mary Magdalen School
At the April 6-7, 2006 ELI faculty retreat, the Orientation Committee, with the addition of S-contract faculty Kathy Hankins and Sarah Petersen formed a group to respond to program evaluations and the Orientation Committee findings and recommendations in regard to improving student services. Following is an overview of the goals and action steps adopted at the retreat for the social activity related matters of the Orientation Committee. ( Deb Detzel, co-chair of Orientation Committee, has agreed to report separately on issues relating to Student Services.)
Orientation Committee Goals and Progress Met for 2006

- **Develop and disseminate trip procedures for escorts**
  - Detailed trip procedures for escorts have been developed thanks to the efforts of a small team headed by Susan Coakley in the summer of ‘06.
  - Procedures have been sent over email to escorts prior to escorting a group on trips.

- **Offer weekend activities for students**
  - We began offering weekend activities in the summer of ’06 when we debuted the 7 week session. We continued to offer more weekend activities in the fall such as the NightmareXtremeScream Park, NYC and Lancaster Shopping Trips.

- **Update trip handouts**
  - Trip handouts fro NYC, Washington DC and Blue Mountain have been developed.

- **Continue to develop and promote successful activities on student participation and results of survey**
  - The Orientation Committee has met formally at least two times during each session and informally 3 -4 times/week to discuss the development and promotion of successful activities based on prior student participation.

Orientation Committee Goals for 2007

- **Develop a written policy for chaperones; win approval by formal vote from faculty**
  - It has come to attention of the committee that we need to adopt an official procedure for chaperones who cancel their commitment at the last minute. There must be more accountability. Very often chaperones cancel the day before and/or the day of an event leaving the co-chairs in a very difficult situation.

- **Expand trip handout folder**
  - We endeavor to expand the file to include Milburn Orchards, The Wilmington Flower Market, Philadelphia, and Hershey Park as well as other excursions as they are added to the calendar.

- **Become more socially involved with UD Language Partners**
  - We plan to work more closely with the Language Partner Program coordinator to schedule more activities with American UD language partners. Also, begin the process to make the Language Partner Program a recognized Student Resident Organization on campus and/or become sponsored by and existing SRO in the meantime.

- **Continue to meet two times per session as a committee , bringing new ideas that foster interesting cross-cultural participation among students**
  - We plan to continue to working hard to bring fresh and exciting activities to our students to make their stay at ELI a memorable one.

Submitted by: Deb Detzel, co-chair

The ELI Orientation Committee has oversight of three main areas: new student orientation, trips and activities and involvement with the community. The report submitted by Mary Beth Worrilow, co-chair outlines the ELI trips and cultural activities of the past year. This report is focused on student orientation.

Most of new student orientation is handled in the office by the ELI staff and administrators. In 2006 we experimented with an intake process involving stations in different areas of the building. Intake involves interfacing with different staff members and moving the process through different locations in the building helps to alleviate crowding and wait time. This model works really well when there is a larger group of students arriving, i.e. more than 25. We can and will use that approach in registration as needed.

Registration and testing of new students includes the campus tour and distribution of handbook and maps. This process has gone smoothly throughout the year, especially with the good-natured and reliable assistance of James Matterer as campus tour guide. We continue to use workstudy students for tours as they are available, but having a reliable person to call on has helped keep the intake orientation process smooth.

The Student Handbook was updated in June 2006 and again in January 2007. The updated version was uploaded to the ELI website in January. Student Handbooks used to prepare orientation folders for sessions III07 – I07 were printed in January along with updated inserts to the folder. Having a large number of orientation folders and materials prepared in advance has allowed for less hectic preparation at the start of new sessions. The ELI secretaries play an important role during intake of new students and they have been trained to handle their part of the process, specifically the checking and photocopying of student insurance documents and collection of emergency medical forms for student Health Services.

We have seen improvement in our relationship with SHS by improving our timeliness and completeness in getting student health forms to them with last names of students highlighted. On January 3, 2007 I was invited to participate in the Blue Hen’s Inservice for SHS professionals by doing a presentation about the ELI program and students. The staff there is genuinely interested in providing the best service possible for students, so the time spent in the inservice was beneficial to them as well as to my understanding of their processes and practices.

Another part of New Student Orientation that has become smoother is in the orientation sessions held during week one of the sessions. The office staff has, for the most part, done well in reserving rooms for the sessions and communicating locations in advance. Coverage for the first session continues to rest with Chris Wolfe and Dr. Stevens. Currently Chris and I are working together on creating a new student orientation PowerPoint to be used for the Monday orientation of week one. We hope to have the PPT ready for session V07 or VI07 at the latest.

The office staff, especially the secretaries, offer a lot of support to new students by answering a myriad of repetitive questions like: how to get a password, how to set up laptops for dorm use, how and where to get a social security number or state ID, how to solve housing problems, etc. While many of these topics are addressed in the student handbook, we realize students need to ask questions and that the interaction is good for them and for us. It is a way to demonstrate our
interest and care for them. Nevertheless, I would like to improve the flow of information on these FAQ’s and plan to work with the secretaries to write up small instruction sheets that can be given to the students along with the verbal explanation they currently receive. I would also like to find a way to get students’ passwords to them more quickly and efficiently after they are in the system, but we have not yet figured out how to accomplish this.

Even with a smooth registration, testing, touring and initial orientation process in place, students have evaluated their orientation experience at an average of 2.12 on the program evaluations of the past 6 sessions. While this scoring is just below “good” but still above average, I believe we can improve on it. The orientation committee is constantly trying to organize activities that introduce and get students involved in both the ELI and UD communities as well as in available events in the larger community. The new service project component that Chris Wolf and I are working on will be part of the answer to this.

Because it is clear that new student orientation and student life orientation are different than organizing trips and activities for students, Mary Beth and I have split the responsibility of the committee along those lines. Chris Wolfe and I are currently working on the Student Services aspect of orientation, and I continue to be involved in trips and activities with Mary Beth. This includes the part of planning and preparation for trips overseen by the office staff including signups and itineraries. Newly updated itineraries for the trips to NYC, DC, Philadelphia and are consistently prepared and copied by the office staff to be given to trip escorts for distribution to students on the buses. We are all working together to expand the file of itineraries and to see that the ELI trips and activities go as planned.

From my perspective, Orientation Committee is one of the most active committees, or perhaps the most active, in the Institute. The members of the committee this year, along with faculty and staff volunteers, have done an unbelievable job of fitting in a lot of interesting and worthwhile trips and activities in the ELI schedule. In the year-end Orientation Committee report submitted by Mary Beth, she accurately outlines the role each committee member filled. The committee members have been great to work with although it has been very difficult to establish regular meeting times. The committee members are active in “virtual meetings” and many decisions and plans throughout the year came about in that way. I still believe though that meeting together two times per session - beginning and end of session - could benefit the committee. Unfortunately, those are the busiest times of the session for faculty and regular meeting times have not yet been established.

Orientation Committee Student Service goals for 2007:

New student orientation PPT ready for session V07 or VI07 at the latest.

FAQ sheets written and available for distribution by office staff.

Expand file of ELI trip itineraries. Formalize and print for distribution trip escort procedures.

Establish and conduct meetings of the Orientation Committee according to a regular schedule each session.