Bringing a Campus Experience to Online Students
February 13, 2014 Webcast
Questions and Answers

06:27 to: Ashley and Kate-Webster University 1
Q: What percentage of new online students participate in orientation?

A: Between 30-35% of online FTEs participate in online orientation currently. Beginning in Fall 2014, all new online students between 18-24 years old will be required to participate in orientation.

07:10 to: Loren Ellison-American Sentinel University 1
Q: How often do you offer the orientation?

A: Since we have several start dates throughout the semester we try to offer several for each start date. We offer a mix of day, evening and Saturday sessions. This spring we offered 10 sessions, but it might vary by semester and how the start dates fall. I also have a recording option available online for students who can’t attend live. Even with that available we get a lot of students attending live. I was afraid it would deter them from attending live, but they still sign up, attend and participate.

07:16 to: Jason Rhode

A: Our Orientation Specialist (Katie Aimone) conducts the online orientation sessions. We have an IT specialist to assist with the chat dialogue and address technology related questions.

08:12 to: ScottV
Q: Are these sessions mandatory?

A: Orientation is optional at this time, but will become mandatory for all new online students between 18-24 years old this fall.

10:40 to: Christine Ahlsten-NDSCS
Q: How long was this orientation?

A: One hour sessions, plus additional time at the end for questions. We usually run about 1:20 after everyone’s questions are answered and they are logged out. But, really depends on the size of the group and the number of questions.
10:52 to: Regis University Department of Learning Design  
Q: Who manages the 24/7 chat?  
A: We manage the chat in-house weekdays from 7:00AM – 9:00PM, with our own counselors and student services staff doing assigned shifts. Overnight and weekends our chat is covered by Blackboard Helpdesk.

11:07 to: MiraCosta College  
Q: Have you tracked impact of orientation (how it helped students who participated vs. those who didn’t)?  
A: We have just begun to track the impact of orientation on student persistence and success. We will have a system fully in place for tracking the mandatory orientation student population this fall.

11:32 to: Pam Humphrey, CCCOnline  
Q: Why did you decide to not make the orientation a required activity?  
A: We are a very large community college with a very diverse population. We get many transient students and students who take both on-campus and online courses. We strongly encourage orientation and have seen steady growth in participation. We have identified the “new to college, 18-24yo” demographic as most needing orientation and have made it mandatory for that group starting this fall.

13:39 to: St. Catherine University  
Q: For your Orientation, could you explain a bit more about the topics that you cover and how much time you spend on each topic? And, what additional materials do you provide to students during this orientation period, such as web resources?  
A: The orientation covers information to help students get started, critical course deadlines, tips for success, instructional and student services available (online tutoring, library, on campus resources), testing (how to take tests for local, out of area, and online testing), and a general overview of a blackboard course site.  
It is a pretty jam packed hour and then we stay on for questions. We have at least one person on chat trying to keep up with questions so students don’t feel like they have to stay on for a long time at the end to get through questions, but I also try to read the questions/answers at the end if they are popular or general questions. We try to steer away from personal questions and encourage students to contact the counselors or financial aid advisors if they have personal questions to discuss. I send a follow up immediately after the session with links to recordings and all the web links to topics discussed. http://eli.nvcc.edu/webinars.htm#orientation
Q: So the Librarian needs to check a different discussion board thread for each course, or is there one site he/she can check and monitor?

A: Each course with an embedded librarian has a discussion board specific to those students. Our librarians are subscribed to the board and are notified when a question is posted and they respond immediately. So they don’t have to monitor every course on a daily basis, but the students still get a response the same day.

Q: Do you have any statistics on the usage of the student union? How many students used it divided by all the students invited to use it?

A: We don’t have very accurate statistics, but it is not more than 10%. The current platform is limited in the data area, which is why we are looking to update the platform and features this summer and better integrate our other social media outreach.

Q: Any copyright issues with the streaming movies?

A: We use SWANK and pay for the copyrights. The librarian works with the book and cinema club and she works with SWANK and digital campus for classes so we are able to work with them for the club. It’s a little difference since it isn’t a class, but since it is for educational purposes they have been able to work with us. We steam it through Blackboard, but only the students in the club are able to access the account and watch the movie. We watch it together and have a twitter chat going as we watch.

Q: Are you using other social media?

A: Our online program at ELI is very active on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and our Virtual Student Union. We also have a YouTube Channel and blog specific to online students. The larger college (including the 6 campuses and ELI) uses Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, iTunesU, Wordpress, Google+, Pintrest, and NOVA TV. We also build mobile apps to connect to students.

Q: Do you find you have a lot of non-online students that also participate in the VSU?

A: We don’t have a lot of non-online students using the VSU, but they are certainly welcome to. We do have a large number of students who take both online and on-campus courses that participate.
20:25 to: Carey Larson
Q: Can you use the same student activity fees that are used for on campus clubs/groups to fund these virtual efforts?

We do get some funds generated from the student activities fee and use that money directly for student life events. We also partner with campus activities to bring on-campus and online students together.

22:09 to: Ed - Pierce eCampus
Q: Can you share the name of that WP add-on?

A: Symposium is the main plug in we use. We have the bronze plus paid level. We are looking at the Big Blue Button add-on as a possibility for some online meetings.

23:48 to: Gannon University
Q: So the reader is common across programs?

A: Yes – this past year (No Impact Man) we just did straight across the board, we used a random sample from the orientation webinar participants. But, when we used The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks last year, we had several faculty who were interested in integrating it into their classes. We included their students and sent them copies of the books. They used them in the class, however, didn’t really participate in the common reader blog as much since they were posting in their class discussion boards.

24:18 to: Carlie
Q: How successful were these initiatives? Were the popular immediately?

A: They have been successful in the impact that they have had on participants. The participation started slow, but has grown each term. It takes time to get these types of programs established, but we are seeing the value in steady increase in popularity and in the feedback we get.

26:17 to: Chris Dayley (Utah State) 1
Q: How do you let students know about (market) the Virtual Union/ common reader program, etc?

A: We market the Common Reader Program through Orientation. We also talk to students who are already engaged in activities (book and cinema club and some other in person events we do) and give out books and information that way. We have used classes in the past, but have gotten a better result when selecting and engaging new students through Orientation.

For the VSU, when we send out event emails we include something about the VSU. We use the VSU for fantasy sports and book and cinema club.
That encourages students to create an account and get started. We promote all of these periodically via our other social media outreach, particularly on Facebook and Twitter.

28:06 to: UW-PLATTEVILLE  
**Q:** How many full time staff are dedicated to these various student engagement programs?  

**A:** We have a core team composed of two librarians, orientation specialist, student life specialist, and outreach specialist. We also utilize our student success coaches, technology specialist, and other student services staff on specific events or projects.

28:26 to: Tony and Sean  
**Q:** How did you survey to find out what percentage of students were using the given social media tools?  

**A:** The college does a general student survey and we pull some data from that.

28:38 to: Crista Calderon - EWU  
**Q:** What kind of prizes?  

**A:** Mostly ELI Swag – we have travel coffee mugs that have been a big hit. We have done t-shirts, pajamas, water bottles, reusable shopping bags, etc.

28:44 to: Ed - Pierce eCampus  
**Q:** Or did your traditional staff get trained on the tools and support the engagement?  

**A:** We have technology trainers who train faculty and staff on the tools.

29:44 to: Jason Rhode  
**Q:** To what extent is your institution integrating the social and community building activities you are doing for your online students with your face-to-face students? Does another student support unit at your campus offer similar engagement activities on campus?  

**A:** Each campus has a student life program. We work with the campuses to collaborate on programs and events, but also make sure to develop unique engagement opportunities for a significant number of fully online students.

29:52 to: Tony and Sean  
**Q:** What is the average attendance volume in the online student social?  

**A:** It varies depending on the event. We may get 200 in an orientation session, 50 in a particular fantasy sports league, 10 in a specific book club reading.
29:56 to: Pat James  
Q: How many staff members work on this project?

31:02 to: Nic Bongers, Oakland University (MI)  
Q: and what department? Student Activities? E-Learning? other?

A: We have online librarians, orientation specialist, student life specialist, outreach specialist, student success coaches, technology specialist who all play a role in ELI’s student engagement efforts. We also coordinate with campus programs and faculty, like when we bring the author of a common reader book to speak and invite the college community to an auditorium for a live event.

37:24 to: Harriet Watkins - University of Texas Arlington 1  
Q: Why did you choose to do this outside the Blackboard platform? Can’t all this be done inside Blackboard? Isn’t that meeting the students where they are? Like Gannon University proposes?

A: We do a lot in Bb, but we want to provide more variety. Students spend a lot of time in Bb because they have to, it is their classroom. We want to give students opportunities to engage where they can interact in a more social setting. Many college campuses have student lounges and student commons areas that are very different than their classrooms… we are doing the same thing, just virtually.

40:53 to: Carlie  
Q: This is an IT type question, but are there any security issues to consider when connecting the students using the various outside elements? Do they log into campus first and then get directed outside? Or do they log in outside from the start? What are the technical logistics? Thank you!

A: Many of these are external to the college portal and require student accounts separate from their school account.

41:15 to: Coastline CC  
Q: Is the online orientation for new online students only and in addition to the general college orientation, or does it replace the general college orientation?

A: It is highly recommended to new online students, however, sometimes students take it again if they have already attempted a class or taken a class. Instructors put the information in their courses and help recommend it to new students. Sometimes students see it in their class and assume it is required. I have had a few students ask for “proof” that they attended, but not many. If students are only enrolled in online courses then yes, it would replace the on campus orientation. However, if students are enrolled in on campus courses as well we recommend they attend orientation on campus.

41:34 to: MiraCosta College  
Q: How will you enforce required orientation?
A: The plan is that students will have an identifier on their account when they are admitted to the college. This will place a registration hold that will be lifted once the student has completed the required orientation and had an advising session.

41:58 to: Pat_James
Q: Security and FERPA?

A: This is not part of the academic record and not a FERPA issue.

43:04 to: Loretta Holkmann-Reid Allied American University
Q: Why only 18-24 years of age required to take the orientation than other age groups?

A: NOVA has almost 80,000 students, and many are students at other institutions or pursuing certifications for employers. We make orientation available to all, but to make it required of all students is impractical.

43:15 to: CSU, Chico
Q: Have you seen a higher retention rate since you started the orientation program?

A: Our persistence and continuation rates have increased, and orientation has contributed to the better retention of students. We expect that all of our engagement efforts have contributed in some small way to increased retention and student success.