

Orientation Methods Questioned

by Susan Cheshire

For the first time since my years at Salem, I participated in Freshman Orientation this fall as a peer adviser. From my observations and from my thoughts about my own experience as a freshman, I have come to believe that as it is now being implemented, our Orientation program may be more detrimental than beneficial to the youngest members of the Salem family. I realize the necessity of an orientation process and feel that your knowledge of the difficulties with our present program will aid in the prevention and elevation of such problems in the future.

The main problem, as I see it,

is length, from which several other problems stem. As compared to many colleges and universities, our orientation schedule is quite lengthy. I am aware that this is designed to give the incoming students sufficient time to settle into Salem life and adjust to the shock of leaving home before the shock of starting classes; however, I believe that many other harmful things are happening during these four days, as well.

First of all, the period of time allotted for orientation is so long that there are many hours of free time each day. Though they are designed for rest, moving in, or getting to know one's neighbors, often times these hours are used to

become homesick, depressed, and discouraged about life here at the College. Even with the day packed full of lectures and meetings, there are still hours upon hours when there is nothing for the student to do except to begin to dislike her new home.

Next, regardless of what is done to enliven the programs, most are uninteresting and uninformative. It seems that the seminars and discussions were devised simply to use up some of the copious free time during the schedule. Many freshmen become bored and restless and fail to attend these programs, leading to more free time and more problems. Obviously, many events are crucial to daily life at Salem, while others could be held just as effectively after the start of classes.

Lastly, the experience offered to the freshman class leads to an altered view of what life at Salem is like. Required attendance at

meetings and someone to make sure the schedule is followed is not an example of college-level life anywhere. Curfews are not enforced during the academic year, nor are one's actions watched as closely as during orientation. The hand-holding and coddling given to the freshmen is welcome at first, but life at Salem is not even akin to the life many become used to during the four days of "summer camp."

I am aware that orientation is essential to making life at Salem successful; however, I believe it can be done more efficiently and in a manner more fitting to Salem. My request is this: that you and the Orientation Committee consider revising the schedule for next fall. I realize that there are some problems inherent in trying to organize such an event as this, but college is a time of personal freedom, of choices, of options. Let our orientation process reflect this.

Speaking To The Alumnae

by Ginger Saunders

As President of SGA one of the priviledges I have enjoyed this year was speaking to the Alumnae Leadership Conference last Wednesday. I was asked by Mary Dameron Holderness, President of the Alumnae Association, to address several questions. The first question she wanted addressed was "What do I think makes Salem unique?" Secondly, she wanted me to lay out what I perceived as the concerns of the current residential students. Finally, I gave some time to the thought of what I thought Salem gave to her students. So, what you read before you today is an abridged version of the talk I presented that day.

It's 8:30 in the morning, and another day dawns across the Salem campus. Everywhere students are rolling out of bed and into the closest dirty clothes on the floor. A quick glance in the mirror reveals that a shower is in need, but it gets put off until after lunch. This is Salem College.

There is a special something here that very few students can explain. I have often found myself in discussions among friends wherein we attempt to determine what exactly it is that sets Salem apart from

other colleges and universities. To me, there seems to be an atmosphere here that promotes individuality and assertiveness. In some ways, this individuality and assertiveness flows from a feeling that Salem students can actively shape their educational experience here. Whether it be in academics or athletics, Salem students take full advantage of available opportunities and create new ones if specific opportunities are not offered. For instance, the January Term allows students much flexibility in creating unique internship experiences. A current senior is a good illustration of this. During a Jan. Term she decided some field of medical research was what she wanted to explore. She designed a program whereby she studied a particular viral strain on village children in the Bahamas. Other students, in the academic arena have opted for self-designed or double majors as productive ways to enhance the curricula offered.

In terms of student life outside the world of the classroom, the sense of creativity and individualism is also apparent. My philosophy here is if Salem doesn't have

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