

Moving day



August doesn't just bring the dog days of summer; it also brings hundreds of students to campus to move in their dorm rooms. Freshmen arrived on Aug. 17 ready to experience the challenges and the fun that college has to offer. (Photo by Jamee Lynch)

Orientation: Serious business as colleges try to support new students

By The College Press Service

New student orientation has taken on greater importance at campuses across the country, especially in the face of national statistics that say more and more students are dropping out or transferring after their freshman year.

According to a recent report from the American College Testing program, the number of students who leave after freshman year is 26.9 percent, an increase of about 2.5 percent over the rate first reported in 1983.

That means if this year's freshman class size is 500, a college can expect about 135 students to drop out or transfer before sophomore year.

Education experts blame the increase on an improving economy, which tempts some students away from academia and into the work world. Also to blame, experts say, are rising tuition costs, where a four-year stay can total more than an entire showroom of Ford Explorers. And as always, there's the loss of students due to homesickness or academic troubles.

So for many schools, freshman orientation, whether it occurs during the summer or before classes start, is the perfect time for officials to pitch the

university's strengths and prompt students to bond with new friends and a new home.

"Any freshman orientation you can do that blows them away...is absolutely necessary," said Diana McNab, director of wellness at the University of Denver. "I honestly think these orientations are probably the biggest impact we can have. We've got to get them right away."

The first weekend at DU, all 600 freshman head to a resort in the Rockies where they join faculty for a few days of square dancing, crafts, and storytelling around a bonfire. Then there's the bonding experience of scaling a mountain peak at midnight. The special attention seems to be paying off at DU: the attrition rate is 10 percent—far less than the national average.

For some students, the adventure is closer to campus. At St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., all 500 freshmen gather around the main quad at night to light candles.

"The Quad Experience [is] a way to make the freshman class feel as if they all are part of an adventure together," explained Lisa Cania, director of university relations. "[We want them to] count on one another and have

experiences that will bind them together."

Other colleges rely on more unusual orientation traditions.

All 450 freshmen at Davidson College in Davidson, N.C., are invited to run the 1.7 mile "Cake Race." The first 80 students to cross the finish line pick from an assortment of cakes baked by the school's faculty and townspeople.

Such traditions reflect the importance given to freshman orientation—especially at private colleges, where the number of students who leave before sophomore year has increased from 22.8 percent in 1983 to 25.9 percent in 1996, according to ACT statistics.

Increasingly, colleges are extending orientation beyond summer sessions and into the classroom. Colleges and universities across the country require freshmen to take orientation classes. The Methodist College Experience, a three-semester-hour class required of new freshmen, helps students with time management techniques, goal-setting, study skills, and writing skills. These types of courses help keep first-year students connected to campus life while providing extra support.

Need help? Here's where to find it

Regardless of whether you are a freshman or a senior, there are a wide variety of services available to assist you with any type of difficulties.

Academic assistance

The Academic Resource Center provides students with tutoring free of charge. Professional tutors are available to work with students individually or in group sessions. Professional tutors are

available for accounting, biology, business, chemistry, economics, English, history, general science (140 series), and math. Peer tutors who are upperclassmen with at least a 3.5 GPA are also available. Computer tutorials are available for selected classes. If you need any academic assistance, visit the Student Success Services Office in the Berns Center or call 630-7151.

Personal assistance

Personal and group counseling at no charge is available at the Counseling and Psychological Services office in Sanford Residence Hall. The office is open Mon.-Thurs. from 9 to 9 and Friday from 9 to 5. Call 630-7150. In addition, the campus minister, Rev. Carrie Parrish, is available to provide personal assistance. Her number is 630-7157.

Attrition Rates at Four-Year Colleges & Universities

Percent of students who do not return for sophomore year

	Public	Private	All
1983	28.6	22.8	24.5
1986	29.5	24.0	25.6
1988	29.6	23.8	25.5
1991	28.3	23.8	25.1
1993	28.1	24.0	25.2
1995	28.6	25.1	26.2
1996	29.0	25.9	26.9

--From American College Testing

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Some news about the news

The staff of the *Pride* would like to welcome all new and returning students to campus. We've undergone staff and design changes and hope you're pleased with the results. We're still recruiting staff members, so if you're interested, call the Director of Student Media at 630-7292. We also welcome any letters, so let us hear from you!

NewsRoundup

From campuses across the country

Citadel opens its doors to women

In a landmark sex discrimination decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled this summer that the state-supported, all-male Virginia Military Institute must open its doors to women. As a result, The Citadel in Charleston, S.C., announced that it would voluntarily accept qualified women into its Corps of Cadets beginning this semester.

The Supreme Court's 7-1 ruling ended a discrimination case that began in 1990, when the Justice Department sued the 157-year-old military college—which has produced some of the nation's outstanding military leaders—to force it to admit women.

The Court ruled that the exclusion of women from VMI's prestigious educational opportunities violated the Constitution's equal protection guarantee.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, writing for the majority, said, "However [well] this plan serves the state's sons, it makes no provision whatever for her daughters. That is not equal protection." The Court also rejected

a separate program at private Mary Baldwin College, charging that it was not a suitable remedy to VMI's all-male problem.

Justice Antonin Scalia, the only dissenter, wrote in his opinion, "I do not think any of us, women included, will be better off for [VMI's] destruction."

Ginsburg wrote that VMI would not be destroyed by the inclusion of women, merely altered, and noted the school's ability to successfully manage change when it admitted blacks in the 1960s.

Two days after the ruling, The Citadel said in a written statement that it would "enthusiastically accept qualified applicants into the Corps of Cadets."

The first woman admitted to The Citadel, Shannon Faulkner, dropped out last summer, citing the emotional strain of her legal battle and her alienation from male cadets.

At a court hearing in July, a federal judge was told by a Citadel lawyer that four women have been accepted as cadets, and as of mid-August, four planned to enroll as full-time students. (See related story, page 2)

Record numbers now graduating in heavy debt

More than likely, it will haunt them for years.

Yet graduate and professional students are choosing to go into greater debt, more often and at younger ages, than ever before.

The alarming trend is producing a "new class of indebted students," according to the report "Graduating Into Debt" released by The Education Resources Institute and the Institute of Higher Education Policy.

The number of students who took out federal loans rose 62 percent in 1995 to more than one million, as compared to 620,000 in 1993, the report said. Those students, both graduate and professional, borrowed nearly \$7.7 billion, up 74 percent from 1993.

The average cumulative debt for dental students is \$68,000; for medical students, \$64,000; and for law students, \$40,000.

Such amounts of debt carry "serious long-term conse-

quences" for students and their careers, the report said.

Among the consequences are higher student loan default rates, reduced consumer spending, and decreased interest in public service careers, which are traditionally lower-paying.

The study is a "clear warning for the public that we are graduating increasing numbers of students and professionals who are mortgaging their futures and destabilizing their careers," said Ted Freeman, TERI president.

No more bare midriffs for track and field athletes

The NCAA has voted on a new uniform standard that prevents female athletes from wearing stomach-revealing two-piece outfits. The ban will start with the 1997 fall season.

The NCAA rules committee, comprised of 25 men and women, banned the popular uniforms for all divisions because of the difficulty in affixing competition numbers which are required to be worn on an athlete's front, side, or back.