

Welcome Week Transition Needs of Residential Students

What are the transitional needs of first-year residential students in the first quarter, and how might Welcome Week programming address these challenges?

Methodology

- Utilizing event participation data from OrgSync, focus groups were conducted with first-year residents who attended Welcome Week, and first-year and upper-class residents that did not attend Welcome Week.
- Originally, notes for each question were organized into four pre-determined domains based on literature and programming at peer institutions: academic success, connectedness, life skills and other.
- Upon initial review of the focus group notes, it was apparent that the pre-determined domains did not best represent the most notable themes and a grounded theory approach was utilized to analyze the data into themes.
- Themes were identified using a four step process that included: an initial read through of the notes, a second reading of the notes leading to preliminary theme identification, creating a comprehensive list of themes derived from preliminary themes and using the final themes to code the notes upon a final reading.

Key Findings

- The following themes emerged from the review of the focus group notes (with a 54% inter-rater agreement): college transition, navigating campus spaces, DePaul campus activities and involvement, and upper-class specific needs.
- Themes related to college transition and navigating the college and local communities were most salient to students around the time that Welcome Week occurred.
- Upper-class students, many of whom voiced being transfer students, did not feel that Welcome Week was for them even though they shared similar transition uncertainties voiced by first-year participants.

Demographics

- 673 residential students attended Welcome Week and 612 residential students did not attend Welcome Week.
- The sample included 54 first-year students who did attend Welcome Week, along with 188 upper-class residents and 45 first-year residents who did not attend Welcome Week.
- Focus group participants included 7 first-year residents who did attend welcome week, along with 9 upper-class residents and 2 first-year residents who did not attend Welcome Week.

Plan of Action

- Consider how to infuse opportunities to cultivate relationships with academic advisors or faculty and include upper-class and transfer students into programming
- In partnership with the Office of Student Involvement; New Student and Family engagement; University Ministry; and the Center for Identity, Inclusion, and Social Change, re-align programming efforts based on themes that would better prepare and engage our students in the first few weeks of the quarter

“It’s hard to figure out what to do and where to go for fun in the city.”