

Summary of the Report on the 2008 New Faculty Orientation Week

The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, in conjunction with the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Human Resources, offered all adjuncts and new faculty – tenure-track and non-tenure track alike – an orientation that focused on numerous aspects of faculty work and the University community. The 2008 New Faculty Orientation Week was held August 18-22, 2008.

The full report describes the week's activities, faculty members' feedback regarding the activities, and recommendations for future new faculty orientations. The report is organized into four sections.

Section One: New Faculty Attendance

Section Two: Daily Activities, Survey Results, and Lessons Learned

Section Three: An Overall Look at the Week

Section Four: Final Thoughts

We present here the *Lessons Learned* text from Sections Two and Three of the full report; we also provide Section Four in its entirety.

Lessons Learned

The faculty provided important feedback that pointed to the following considerations for next year's New Faculty Orientation:

1. The need to provide more opportunities for the faculty to work collaboratively on two important tasks:
 - a. Syllabus construction (especially for multiple-section courses)
 - b. Writing and reviewing student learning outcome statements
2. There is a need for FCTL to devote more attention to designing, organizing, and implementing the "syllabus" sessions
3. FCTL could offer a follow-up session on outcomes and assessment that would provide more one-on-one assistance to faculty, including assistance with methodology and analysis of assessment data
4. David Pilgrim, his presentation, and the subsequent small group discussions were extraordinarily positive experiences for the faculty
5. Obtain Novel usernames and passwords well in advance of the week
6. Tailor FerrisConnect training session so as to better meet the varying levels of expertise, familiarity, and need for using the system

7. The little feedback provided about the session titled, *Managing a College Classroom in the Age of the Millennials*, was mixed. At the very least, a more interactive, and possibly shorter, presentation format needs to be developed to communicate this important information
8. As often and as much as possible, presentations must be interactive
9. Refocus our attention again on developing a set of engaging sessions and activities that meet the varying and often disparate needs of the new faculty
10. Non-tenure track faculty need not be part of the FFA discussion
11. Have a moderator for next year's *Wisdom from Experience* session and include more faculty panelists
12. The session on committees may be better placed in the schedule for the year-long New Faculty Transition Program
13. If possible, offer the FLITE session in FLITE
14. Encourage and support colleges and departments in their efforts to develop effective communications with the new faculty both prior to and during the New Faculty Orientation Week
15. Consider soliciting promotional items from local merchants
16. Partially in response to the need to develop sessions and activities that address the diverse needs of new faculty, consider offering an orientation program earlier in the summer. Providing such a program may afford new faculty more time to apply what they learn to their course syllabi, teaching and assessment methods, etc.

Section Three: Final Thoughts

As with any endeavor of this sort, which requires a great deal of clear and effective communication, thoughtful planning, careful implementation, and thorough evaluation, there is much to be learned and much that can be improved. We have addressed many of these areas for improvement in the text above. Here, we simply offer a few final reflections on other aspects of the 2008 New Faculty Orientation Week.

1. At next year's New Faculty Orientation Week, we need to be certain to collect feedback from the faculty about their experience that first day when they meet with staff in the Human Resources Department
2. In advance of the New Faculty Orientation Week, we need to provide the new faculty as much information as possible on the web or by e-mail. This information should include the week's schedule and presentation materials. Incidentally, at the outset of this year's week's activities (and throughout the week), we provided the new faculty a CD-ROM with most of the presentation materials. We have also, since the week, provided access to many of the materials on the FCTL website (see: http://www.ferris.edu/fctl/Announcements/NFOW_2008_Schedule.htm)

3. All offices and personnel involved in planning and implementing the New Faculty Orientation Week must themselves communicate clearly, often, and effectively prior to and during the week. As noted previously, an *ad hoc* group comprised of persons from Academic Affairs, FCTL, and colleges such as Arts and Sciences and Professional and Technological Studies, have met to discuss many logistical aspects of NFW. We are hopeful that this advanced planning and communication will result in fewer miscommunications, duplication of efforts, etc.
4. We need to provide healthier and requested foods throughout the week such as yogurt, fruit, muffins, bagels, juices, tea, and coffee
5. Depending upon the make-up of the new faculty group, it may be important to include one or more sessions on adult learners and graduate school learners
6. If we offer sessions again on syllabus building, writing student learning outcomes, and curriculum design, we need to invite the faculty to bring their laptop computers and materials (or at least the materials if the sessions are held in a computer lab)
7. The schedule of the New Faculty Orientation Week has changed each year, as we try to find the appropriate balance of time-on and off tasks, and offer the faculty the most useful and practical tools, information, and experiences. In addition to these challenges, we recognize that the new faculty who join Ferris State University come with varying kinds and years of teaching experience. This fact alone necessitates careful consideration of how to tailor the week's activities to meet these varying needs of the new faculty. Faculty with little to no teaching experience, in particular, expressed their need for more assistance with the many basic aspects of learner-centered teaching, classroom management, curriculum design, etc.

We will give this careful attention as we look ahead to the 2009 New Faculty Orientation. As part of our consideration of this, we will invite the current new faculty to offer their advice and guidance. We also welcome and will seek the same advice and guidance from Academic Affairs, Deans, and Department Heads and Chairs.

*-Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
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