

**Annual Report to Senate on Orientation 2011**  
**Senate Orientation Activities Review Board (SOARB)**  
**November 2011**

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SOARB commends student organizers, under the leadership of Orientation Roundtable Coordinator Rachel Shindman, for outstanding cooperation and collaboration during the planning and execution of Orientation Week 2011. Getting the Orientation Week concert back on campus required ongoing negotiations among Orientation organizers, student government, municipal government and public institutions.

Update from 2010 Recommendations.

- **SOARB will consult with SCAP and other campus stakeholders before recommending a policy [on accommodation of Faith Dates] to Senate.**

The Senate Orientation Activities Review Board (SOARB) consulted with The Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP.) SOARB reviewed SCAP's practice that faith-based accommodations are resolved on an ad hoc basis between the student concerned and the appropriate instructor or event coordinator. As Orientation Week conventionally precedes the start of the Academic Year, SOARB will not make any policy recommendation that will compromise SCAP's ability to set sessional dates.

- **SOARB recommends that the members of [Orientation Roundtable] work with each other to ensure centralized access to information. The ORT coordinator is encouraged to work with Queen's Marketing and Communications to give Orientation a place of prominence on the Queen's main page.**

In January 2011, ORT started working with the Queen's Marketing and Communications Office. The Orientation Website [www.queensu.ca/orientation](http://www.queensu.ca/orientation) was up and running in June and was highlighted on the Queen's home page throughout the summer. The site provided a centralized hub of information on undergraduate Orientation Week including: the dates of Orientation, a 'Find Your Week' page that helped students investigate the nine available weeks, a full page for First Year Not In Residence Students, information on the mystery concert, general information on registration, frequently asked questions, and a contact page. While the site included some information on Orientation programmes for graduate and professional students there is more that can be done in that area for future years.

### Comments on Orientation 2011

In addition to recommendations that are specific to individual Faculties and Schools, and will be conveyed to them in writing, SOARB makes the following general recommendations:

While Orientation 2011 can be considered a success, the Board recognizes that there is no clear expectation communicated to organizers that Orientation Week represents a realistic model of life at University, a model that balances social activities, academic pursuits and personal wellness. Despite directives, in 2009 and 2010 for Orientation Activities to include more academic content, planners and organizers often replicate previous programmes and do not innovate by developing fun and engaging ways to combine the social aspects of Orientation Week with academic preparedness. Personal wellness, specifically adequate sleep, is often compromised by early event start times.

- **SOARB will review the Goals of Orientation and attach meaningful, actionable and measurable objectives to those Goals. These goals and objectives should be communicated to Organizers by February 1, 2012 in order to be implemented for Orientation 2012.**

Promoting health through physical activity is positive and should remain a component of Orientation Week. However, the Board recognizes that some aspects of the physical nature of Orientation Week are not inclusive. All groups currently do a good job of accommodating physical limitations that are obvious and visible. However there is no indication that much, aside from self-exclusion, is done to accommodate students whose limitations are not visibly apparent or who are not inclined or not interested in participating in highly physical events. While high energy events can build excitement, organizers ought to be able to identify the specific benefits of all physical components within each event; those components are not just what takes place during the event but also the transitions between events and how expectations of those transitions are communicated to participants.

- **SOARB expects that low-energy/less physical events will be organized with as much thought, structure and intention to engage as high-energy/physical ones. The Board**

**recommends that each Orientation committee plan their 2012 programme to provide a plurality of options for events that are not defined by willingness or ability to participate.**

Current event approval is a three-part sign-off; the event is planned by the committee and submitted first to the Faculty Society President or equivalent, second to the appropriate Dean or designate in charge of the programme and finally to Orientation Roundtable. When an event is changed, even in a small way, it ought to be re-submitted; however, the current hard-copy submission method is a deterrent. While an online submission method would allow signatories to be notified each time a form is modified there would be a cost to the development and maintenance of an online system. Who could or should bear that cost is not immediately clear.

- **SOARB recommends that Orientation Roundtable develop a method of event submission which ensures that risk assessment happens throughout the planning process. This process must be in place by March 2012, to ensure its implementation for Orientation 2012.**

For many years, SOARB has provided a number of exemptions to policy. These exemptions generally fall into three categories: exemptions to start and end times of day, exemptions, with provisions, to allow use of a banned substance and exemptions that allow prohibited activities to be undertaken if conditions are met.

- **SOARB notes that previous success obtaining an exemption should not be considered a guarantee of future success. It is the preference of the Board that Orientation organizers adjust planning rather than seek exemptions.**

In March 2011 SOARB voted to suspend the conventional Principal's Welcome while a sub-committee consisting of representatives from Orientation Round Table, SOARB, the Office of the Principal, Residence Life, and the Office of the Registrar, reviewed the event and made a recommendation for 2012 and beyond. Members of Senate communicated their expectation that the Welcome not be suspended for 2011 and that a review be undertaken. A welcome did take place and the review process is currently underway.