Ready, Set, Go! The Lifecycle of Successful Student Transition

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Karen Newson
A DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION

• The proportion of low socio-economic status (SES) students enrolled at the University is 24.6% – above the sector average

• Our Indigenous student population is one of the largest in Australia, with almost 4884 enrolments

• Female students outweigh male students, current ratio is 55 : 44

• Almost half of all of our students are ‘First in Family’

• 66% of our students are over 20 years of age
1. Outreach to Offers (OtO)

- Friends on Campus – High School Outreach program – Uni Staff and students
- Start Smart – non-school leaver engagement program
FRIENDS ON CAMPUS

"I liked the extra insight into life as a uni student told by a uni student"

"I liked that we got real life advice, tips and information"

"The sessions with the Uni students was engaging and easy to understand"

"I like the extensive description of the courses and how to get into uni info, really good."

"I really liked that we were taught how to time plan for our study"

2017 = 569 students across 15 schools visits
FRIENDS ON CAMPUS

Delivery

- Study Skills
- UAC Process
- Big Picture Education
- Learning Conferences
- Parent Info Sessions
FRIENDS ON CAMPUS

Outcomes

- Following High School visits, 35% of all students sent emails to staff or mentors asking questions.
- 3 schools showed a 50% and above increase in students accepted into Universities.
- High Schools showed an increase in engagement with our University and requested visits for “one off” presentations.
START SMART
An early round offer engagement event for non-school leavers

“I thought the concept of Start Smart was brilliant and answered all my questions that I was stressed about”

“Start Smart was definitely something that I needed prior to starting university, I am grateful that it was held”

“Everyone was lovely, made me feel I belong”

“This event was great, made me feel like I was already welcome and belong”
• Increase early engagement
• Assist students to make personal connections
• Build a sense of belonging for the respective campus and institution
• Assist students to be prepared early
• Provide students with relevant, informative and useful information in a relaxed atmosphere
Why we needed to engage early

- **Aug**: 6 plus months
- **Sept**: 5 plus months
- **Oct**: 4 plus months
- **Nov**: 3 plus months
- **Dec**: 2 plus months

Enrolments: **Mid Dec**
Orientation: **Late Feb**
Semester 1 commencement: **Late Feb/Early March**
97% of attendees still enrolled in programs at UON (compared with those students who did not come only 79.5% still active)

37% of those who attended Start Smart did not attend Orientation

3% students that attended discontinued (compared those not attending 15.5% discontinuing 5% deferred)

Early engagement achieved / Innovation to continue

Excellent Feedback

Attendance was low, encourage participation and Orientation attendance affected
2. Offers to Census Date (OCD)

- Learning Impacts
- Welcome phone calls
- Parent Info Sessions
- Orientation
- Student Mentor Program
- Pop Up ‘Ask Me’ booths
- Social and Engagement Activities
- Targeted commencing students ‘Welcome Calls’
### Learning Impacts questions

- Sporting or Performing Arts commitments
- Job
  - 35+ hours
  - 20-34 hours
  - Less than 20 hours
- Community Commitments
- Limited computer access
- Extended travel time
- Require Academic Skills assistance eg Research skills, essay writing, English Language
- Learning Challenges (ADHD, dyslexia, Irlen etc)
- Chronic Illness or medical condition
- Financial hardship
- Out of home care
- Dependant children
- Carer responsibilities
- Other diagnosed emotional/physical impacts not mentioned
OFFERS TO CENSUS DATE
COMMUNICATION PLAN

TARGET AUDIENCES
Students Commencing Study in Semester 1 – all domestic campuses and online

KEY MESSAGES

- **Belonging** – creating a connection to the University and a sense of belonging.
- **Nurtured and supported** – instilling a sense of being supported throughout their university journey.
- **Prepared** – ensuring students have the information they need to prepare for university study.
COMMUNICATION PLAN

STAGES

- Accept your offer
  - Congratulations

- Welcome to UON
  - You're part of the community

- Prepare for uni study
  - Academic preparation
  - Admin Essentials

- Enrol
  - Preparation
  - Instructions

- Orientation
  - Why attend
  - What's on

- Commence
  - Week 1 - Start on the Right Foot
  - Week 2 - Work smarter for academic success
  - Week 3 - Don't go it alone
  - Week 4 - Drop in, don't drop out
WELCOME CALLS TOP QUESTIONS ASKED

Calls centred around answering any questions and offering support to accept and navigate systems

- Preference Information
- How to accept
- Deferring
- Not knowing an offer received
- Various reasons with no overall trend for not accepting

Based on Semester 1, 2017 Commencing Students. Total of 778 students spoken to.
PARENT / FRIEND INFORMATION SESSIONS

Held 2 weeks prior to Semester commencement

“First time at this uni so it was great to walk around before the info session”

“Thank you for taking the time to share this information with us”

“Well presented and concise”

“The lecture format was great - I prefer this to trawling the website. I appreciated finding out about which books to buy / not buy (ie.waiting until told by the lecturer).”

“Very informative, thank you”
Post card communications

You can help the student in your life get ready for uni study
If you want to know how to support their study or have questions that have not been answered, we would love to see you.

We know that parents and friends are a crucial factor in a student's success equation, so you can make a difference.

Parents and friends of students are invited to come along to the University of Newcastle for an information session and a chance to talk to current students and staff from the University.

Light refreshments will be served following the session.

When  Monday, 6 February
Time  5pm
Venue  The Purdue Room
       The Great Hall
       Callaghan Campus
       University of Newcastle
ORIENTATION

• Designed to inspire students with big focus on support available and using students to delivery key message

• Run week prior to commencement

• Different days for different Cohorts

• Similar day activities incorporating Supportive, Learning and Social Engagement

“Orientation is a must, it helped me so much and made me feel so much more relaxed come the first day. Everyone there made the morning stress free which made me feel so much better.”

“I loved the 2nd year students talking to us about their experiences and giving tips, they were really honest about what to expect, which helped.”

“I met a few people in my course and by the end of the day already formed great relationships with them. Can’t wait to start and see them again. The day helped me to prepare myself socially and academically for Uni life – thanks.”
Welcome Session outlining key support messages and use of interactive and animated presentations.

Inspire and Interact Sessions (staff/students/mentors)

Academic Sessions – Program Information Sessions

BBQ lunches with live entertainment

Expo with 100 exhibitors (internal) – Clubs and Societies (Interest, sporting, social), university support services, academic learning support, library etc

Campus tours

Workshops ‘Smart Study’

Entertainment through out afternoon eg: live music/ Chill Out spots / Sporting activities – Rock climbing, dunk tank, mini golf etc

Our Shout

Evening activities each night such as outdoor movie nights, comedy nights, Sports Jam.

Recorded session/links sent to students unable to attend
**Orientation Attendance Findings**

**Student Success Rates (commencing undergraduate)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Attended Orientation</th>
<th>Did not attend Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1, 2017</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester 2, 2016</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
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<td>81%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre Census Withdrawal Rate - 2017 to date (commencing undergraduate)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended Orientation</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not attend Orientation</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDENT MENTORS

• Available at Orientation to greet students
• Can register for a mentor at Orientation
• Matching Mentors / Mentees by areas of study
• Opt In / Out system
• Coffee / Drink vouchers
• Regular contact first 6 weeks of study
• Social activities Mentors / Mentees
  / BBQs / Pizza /

"my mentor was kind, patient and extremely helpful with any questions - It is a fantastic program!!!"

"They helped remind me of important upcoming dates that I needed to know about."

"Sally was a great mentor, with the beginning of semester being really intimidating, she really helped me through."
POP UP ‘Ask Me’
Taking advice and support on the road

POP UPS - COMMON ENQUIRIES

- Directions: 10%
- PASS: 18%
- Study Skills: 13%
- Adverse Circumstances: 3%
- Counselling/Student Support: 8%
- Health Service: 3%
- Student Advisors: 8%
- Mentors: 3%
- Careers: 18%
- Learning Development: 16%
OFFERS TO CENSUS DATE OCD PERIOD

Targeted approach throughout the student journey

• Welcome Party ‘O Party’
• Free weekly lunch BBQ
• ‘Your Week’ Expo by external parties
• Movie Nights
• International Women’s Day
• Community Garden Day
• Clubs and Societies Showcase

• Festival of Autonomy Week
• Enterprise & Innovation Week
• Movie Nights
• Cultural Awakenings Festival
• Careers & Employment Expos
• Harmony Day
• Sex Health Awareness Week Expo
• Education Careers Expo
Who: Learning Impact indicators
   – Commencing Students
What: Just after Orientation – Week 2 of Semester
Why:
• Reduce pre-census attrition for students spoken to vs. the comparison group (those not spoken to)
• Promote key success messages
• Pro-actively provide support to students
### FINDINGS

2581 students spoken to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best things about Uni</th>
<th>Biggest Challenges</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Specific Course or Course Content in General (30.2%)</td>
<td>• Finding a car park (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meeting New People (17.3%)</td>
<td>• Taking time to adjust – Balancing uni with life (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting Nature of Staff and Students (9%)</td>
<td>• Overwhelmed with coursework (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning New Things (6.5%)</td>
<td>• Finding way around campus (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Course content not engaging (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inflexible timetable (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower pre-census withdrawal rate of 5.9% than those not spoken to 9.8%

113 referrals to specific support services / information

85% of commencing students reported a positive experience
TOP 10 REFERRALS

- Student Processes 36%
- Support Services 20%
- Changing Study Load 12%
- Online Systems 7%
- Clubs and Societies 4%
- What to do if you miss a class? 4%
- Textbooks
- Finding a tutor
- Info re: Practicals
- Exam Period
3. Census Date to Exams (CDX)

- First Year Social gatherings
- Stick with It – Encouraging students to remain enrolled
- ‘Stress Less’ Pre Exam activities
- Pre exam support
- Pop Up ‘Exam Reviver’ (booths near first year exams)
SOCIAL AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Census Date to Exams (CDX) period

Continued targeted approach throughout the student journey

- Outdoor Movie Nights
- Free Lunch BBQ
- Trivia events
- Education Careers Expo
- Toga Party
- Community Garden Harvest
- Universities Mental Health Day
- Campus Band Comp
- Careers Expo
- Create 2308
- Stress Less
- World Mental Health Day
- Ride to Uni Day
- Halloween party
- Community Garden Harvest
- Green Week
- The End Party
STICK WITH IT!
Encouraging Students to remain enrolled

Objectives

• Enhance student experience through fostering a supportive environment

• Increase awareness of key support services and programs that will assist students at the end of Semester 2

• Decrease preventable student attrition at the end of Semester

• Reiterate key success messages (focused, directed, nurtured) at a point of stress for students

Timeframe: Weeks 8-13 Leading into exam period
STRESS LESS’ PRE EXAM ACTIVITIES

Time for time out!

Support Staff participation and coordination of activities:

Eg: Pot-a-Herb, mini massages, crochet circle, free lunch, live music, learn to play the drums, bring your pet to uni day
PRE EXAM SUPPORT

- Pre exam timetable email
- Exam Prep email
- Phone calls and follow up
- Post exam congratulations email

Sometimes the unexpected happens... that's what Adverse Circumstances are for!

Go to Ask UON and search ‘Adverse Circumstances’

All with links to Support Services
PRE EXAM PHONE CALLS/ EMAILS - ANALYSIS

Results by Campaign Outcome

- All Commencing Students
- Vulnerable - Opened Email/SMS
- Vulnerable - Spoken To
- Vulnerable - Not Spoken To

Courses Passed
Courses Failed
Courses WW
Courses Incomplete

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POP UP ‘EXAM REVIVER’
(BOOTHs NEAR FIRST YEAR EXAMS)

Questions / Advice
• Adverse Circumstances
• Counselling
• Support Referral
• Congratulations on getting this far
• Offer of drink / chocolates / merchandise
• Offer encouragement

Located near first year exams
The 3 campaigns we have run from prospects through to the end of semester, has allowed us have the following;

• Greater understanding of our prospective student wants and needs

• A consistent and structured approach to our support and communication to students

• Ability to make it a seamless journey for each person, with us being able to anticipate the information they need next before they do!

• The information to prepare students before then commence and then support them during their new journey
Thank You