College of Technology Graduate Student Orientation Packet

Abstract

Through research and studies it has been found that when a graduate student first arrives at Purdue University’s campus, oftentimes they feel they lack the resources needed to successfully integrate with the student body. Furthermore, graduate students find it difficult to establish a home and to find a community to operate within. The purpose of this graduate student orientation packet is to provide recently admitted graduated students with some perspective as well as tools and resources in order to get acclimated with the West Lafayette community. This document was created to act in conjunction with a variety of tools provided by Purdue University to attract and retain a qualified and diverse graduate student body. To encourage diversity, the College of Technology has taken a creative approach to display the various forms of cultural inclusion that the Purdue University and its surrounding communities can provide in the form of the inclusive orientation package. Equipped with this document, students are able to contact resources respective to their needs. When students initially arrive to the campus, this packet will aid them in the fundamental process of finding a home by providing them with information pertaining to basic housing needs such as locations, geographical distances from Purdue University campus, rates, and contact information. When students are searching for a respective community, this document will assist by identifying a variety of cultural communities and organizations at the university. It is understood that stress can be considered an inevitable consequence of undertaking continuing education; this document describes the resources of psychological services offered by the university. The packet also presents to the potential student academic class registration information. The intended audiences are the students that are unfamiliar with Purdue University’s resources that are specifically for their use and present to the potential student a centralized document that of information. The totality of this packet acts as an attractive source for recruitment and retention of qualified candidates.

Introduction

Purdue University has always taken pride in its graduate student enrollment numbers. As the emphasis has moved away from sheer enrollment size classification and towards quality graduate student work, Purdue University has been able to keep abreast with the changing needs of the incoming graduate student class. One method that Purdue University, more specifically the College of Technology uses is a newly revised Graduate Student Orientation Packet. The purpose of this graduate student orientation packet is to provide graduate students with tools and resources to enable them to get acclimated with the West Lafayette community and the inclusive culture fostered at Purdue.

The packet information addresses the major categories of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs\textsuperscript{11}. For the purpose of this article, the headings (physiological, safety, belonging, esteem) will be addressed accordingly. The information being judged as “valuable” will be decided as it addresses tangible as well as intangible aspects that will facilitate a smooth transition to a foreign community. The end goal of the packet is to assist students in realizing their full potential as graduate students at Purdue University.
Physiological Needs (Figure 1)

The physiological needs of any human (food, shelter, sleep, etc) are most important and in order to accomplish any goal, these types of needs must be met. Due to the fundamental biology of this specific level—physiological, it is of utmost importance that as students seek continuing education, the fulfillment of their physiological needs ranks highest among the institution goals.

Figure 1—Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs: Physiological Needs

The orientation packet addresses the physiological needs of the students by providing information related to the basic necessities associated with daily operations. The housing and transportation section provides information pertaining to shelter containing information about:

- Housing prices
- Distance from center of University
- Possible public transit routes provided
- Nearby attractions

It is possible to make housing arrangements from remote locations with the access of fax machines, scanners, and/or internet capabilities. The apartment complexes that give special consideration pertaining to pricing given to graduate students are listed in this packet. This packet can be seen as a proactive tool at the student’s disposal in order to facilitate living arrangements prior to physically arriving at the University.

Safety Needs (Figure 2)

Compounding upon the satisfactory fulfillment of the student’s physiological needs is safety. Safety in non-emergency settings is of little interest to adults, but it is an obvious need in a life threatening situation.
The orientation packet addresses the possible breach of security by providing a listing of emergency contact information from University Police Department to the City Police Department. The same information is presented for the fire department and officials. Information regarding self-defense classes offered by the University is available as well.

Belonging (Figure 3)

The inevitable sense of wanting to belong is preceded by the students’ ability to feel that their basic needs for survival are met along with the feeling of security in their surroundings. “A psychological sense of ‘community’ is achieved through perceptions of similarity to others, acknowledged interdependence with others, willingness to maintain interdependence by giving to, or doing for others, willingness to maintain interdependence by giving to, or doing for others what one expects from them” [13]. A community can be thought of as a setting in reciprocal emotions and actions among members. McMillian and Chavis [10] describe an operational community consisting of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and a shared emotional connection. For the purposes of this orientation packet, a community is defined as the quality or character of human relationships based on the research conducted by McMillian and Chavis. Student learning is facilitated as a function of social group interaction [5].

Figure 3—Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs: Belongingness [11]
By providing a listing of campus affiliated organizations at Purdue University, the packet addresses the needs of students. Purdue University houses over 1,200 student organizations entitled to the full rights and privileges of the University. Funding is available for all organizations by an application process. Organizations are relatively simple to form, sustain, and grow. The packet provides information pertaining to existing student organizations, forming a new student organization, as well as other aspects of student activities housed within the University, such as the volunteer networking system in which students have access to community volunteering services. A student’s ability to find, connect, and interact with people of a similar background offers emotional stability at a University.

Esteem (Figure 4)

The need for esteem becomes a dominant desire once the first three levels are achieved. The essence of how a student views him/herself is seen as esteem. Crocker and Knight suggest that the importance of self-esteem is not held in whether the esteem is high or low, rather it lies in what people believe they need to be or do to have value and worth as a person. A student’s level of ownership in their personal educational and social process is closely related to their academic adjustment.

![Figure 4—Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs: Esteem](image)

Fostering an environment of responsibility that is achievable and required is how the packet aids in fulfilling esteem needs. The packet works in conjunction with existing College of Technology literature on how to complete course registration. The packet provides helpful advice on how to navigate the newly implemented registration portal implemented at Purdue University—My Purdue. Allowing the student to create a sense of stability in their own education is an avenue by which the packet provides help.

Conclusion

Self actualization is achieved at an individual pace. It cannot (and should not) be rushed or forced. It is assumed that once self actualization is obtained the student’s overall experience at a University will be more pleasant and self-fulfilling. The College of Technology at Purdue University is not claiming that the graduate student orientation packet created is the sole tool that should be utilized in order for a student to realize their full potential and/or a successful transition to the community; it is simply acting as an aid. It is fully recognized that extraneous
circumstances impact the students’ ability to migrate to a new culture; the purpose of the packet is to make the transition smoother.

Bibliography