

Orientation to College

Orientation History

Gateway Community and Technical College (GCTC) New Student Orientation started as an optional one-hour presentation run by the admissions office. In 2011, the advising center recognized a need for a more comprehensive and mandatory program. All new students, including students enrolled in the Gateway Regional Academy (GRA) with fewer than 12 college level transfer credits, were required to attend orientation to create their first semester schedule. This process was called SOAR (Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration). At SOAR, up to 24 students sat through a 60 – 90 minute lecture then enrolled in classes in a group environment with help from their advisor.

During the accreditation reaffirmation process, the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) process, the need for a more engaging and interactive orientation as well as more comprehensive advising was recognized. Thus, SMART Orientation (Student Mentoring through Advising, Retention, and Transitions) was conceived. SMART Orientation rolled out in April 2014 with an initial cohort of students from the Protective and Professional Services division; Business, Design, and Technology division; and undecided students – regardless of transfer status. All other students continue to proceed through the old SOAR process.

SMART Orientation

The new SMART Orientation is broken into modules covering multiple subject areas. It provides students with a choice of delivery mode: in-person or online. After students are admitted to Gateway, they meet with a professional advisor. At the end of the meeting, the advisor discusses the two orientation options and signs the student up for their preferred mode of delivery.

In-person orientation is staffed by faculty and staff volunteers from across the college. Online orientation is housed in Blackboard and covers the same material as in-person orientation.

SMART Orientation is currently made up of four modules:

- 1) **Engagement** – Includes a welcome video from Dr. Hughes, an ice breaker, and coverage of the orientation syllabus.
- 2) **Getting Started** – Includes preparations for the first day of class, classroom etiquette, and consequences of being a “no-show” during the first week of the term.
- 3) **Paying for College** – Includes information about tuition/charges, financial aid processes, student loan responsibilities, and Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) guidelines.
- 4) **Technology & Enrollment** – Includes information about the GCTC website and various student accounts (student self-service, email, Blackboard, etc.). Students finish orientation by enrolling in their first semester classes.

Goals and Outcomes

The main goal of SMART Orientation is to adequately prepare students for their first semester of classes at GCTC. Specifically, the aim is to reduce the “no-show” rate (students who register, but fail to attend the courses) and increase the persistence rate for the first semester. Because we are still in the first semester of Cohort I, these numbers have not yet been collected.

GEN 102 – Orientation to College

In follow-up and support of the regular orientation to college, students also have the ability to enroll in GEN 102, an orientation to college course available to all students. Many student in the college’s dual credit programs in the high schools take this class. Students enrolled in this course are taught how to have a successful college experience, both academically and personally. The focus is on the development of practical knowledge and skills to assist students toward that goal. Topics include time planning, test taking, study techniques, critical thinking, community and campus resources, and managing the personal and relationship issues that face many students.

College is very different from other educational experiences, so GEN 102 is designed to help students make a smooth transition to college. They will learn the vocabulary, expectations, and culture of being a college student; gain knowledge of what types of resources, people, and skill development activities are available to promote student success, and discover how the university environment can enrich a student’s life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/COMPETENCIES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify campus resources and demonstrate use of technology.
2. Identify and apply personal learning and memory preferences.
3. Apply self-management skills.
4. Employ critical reading strategies.
5. Employ critical thinking strategies.
6. Demonstrate classroom skills and behaviors.
7. Demonstrate test-taking strategies.
8. Use career exploration tools.

The course is not mandatory at this time, but advisors strongly encourage students to take it. The course is not mandatory because it is not part of the AAS or certificate programs; therefore, students would be paying for a class that is not required to complete their program.

The college hosts four county Adult Education programs (Kenton, Boone, Owen, and Grant). The adult education programs offer orientations to their program and provides information and advising to students who plan to transfer to Gateway after they complete their GED.