

Orientation Review Report

By the Undergraduate Student Government

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Abstract

During the Summer term of 2024, the President's Office made the decision to change the undergraduate Orientation process from a one-week introductory period to two separate periods: an academic summer session and a college life session at the beginning of the year. This decision was made without student input and received backlash from many students when announced. In response, the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) conducted a survey to analyze undergraduate sentiments about the new Orientation.

Overall Results

Reaching just under **14%** of the Student Assembly with **826** responses, the majority of feedback from the survey indicates students view the historical Orientation Week positively.

Our respondents indicated that Orientation Week was overwhelmingly successful in connecting students to their peers and the campus community, but slightly weaker at preparing students for their classes, while still being generally positive. A large majority of students from all class years noted that they are still in contact with others from their Orientation Team. Over 70% of students also note that they had not attended another Orientation program other than Michigan Tech's.

We also had **24** individuals email the Undergraduate Student Government to express their opinions regarding the change in more detail. Most of the feedback viewed the changes to Orientation in a negative light, with multiple individuals citing the personal connections they gained during Orientation Week, difficulties in meeting the additional cost that could be incurred by the summer session, and additional hardships that Support Packs—families, parents, and friends supporting students on their journey to Michigan Tech—and students would have to face alike. 10 excerpts from students we obtained permission from can be found in **Appendix II**.

In the Undergraduate Student Government's research, we also reached out to other Midwestern universities, both with a similar model to Michigan Tech's Orientation program and similar to the new model. Our research concluded that the new Orientation model does provide some benefits for these other universities, but does have its downsides. For example, it was cited that it was much harder to engage students virtually to become part of the campus community.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Due to the findings presented in this report, the Undergraduate Student Government makes the following recommendations and conclusions regarding the new Orientation changes for Fall 2025.



While the change for Orientation is final for Fall 2025, we believe that an emphasis on collecting data from students and their Support Packs is crucial to understanding how the change potentially impacts incoming students and the campus community. Through the results of the survey and emails, we see the high “social value” in the historical Orientation Week program, and recommend that an aspect of the data collection specifically focuses on a student’s connection to their peers, the campus community, and those that students interacted with during Orientation.

Combined with this, we also recommend a specific investment on the social aspect of Orientation, as our survey results and emails show that it has a very high return on investment for the effort put in. While the newer Orientation model does not specifically cut social activities, it does not appear to make any steps forward in encouraging them either. Over 70% of our respondents indicated that social activities should be prioritized if Orientation Week was shortened, and while students are more prone to enjoy and be drawn towards the social activities, they also indicated that it was the most valuable part of Orientation to them.

The Undergraduate Student Government also sees the importance of transparency and supporting incoming students and their Support Pack as much as possible. The original plan for the new Orientation program was to not directly advertise the virtual summer session as an option to incoming students, but instead make accommodations for students who miss all 4 of the summer sessions or reach out directly. Many other universities that offer a similar Orientation program to the newly introduced program at Michigan Tech also offer and advertise a virtual session to accommodate students who are far away, don’t have the financial or physical support to attend, or have extenuating circumstances. Many current students don’t live in the Upper Peninsula, and must travel several hundreds of miles to get to Houghton, MI. We recommend that Michigan Tech advertise a virtual summer session to students, as we’ve found several other examples of universities offering virtual sessions or who have gone solely virtual for their summer sessions.

Background Information

Historical Orientation Structure

Orientation at Michigan Tech was previously advertised and formatted as Orientation Week. This program, which consisted of content from Sunday to Friday directly before classes, began to introduce students to their academic department, the support structures on campus, and peers who could guide them in becoming a part of the Michigan Tech community. Students typically moved on campus during the Friday and Saturday before this program and would take part in many required and optional activities throughout the week.



Main Changes

The academic summer session will include meetings with advisors, campus tours, an overview of registration, and an opportunity to set up a student's Michigan Tech accounts. The days immediately prior to the semester start will include the usual social activities, student organization recruitment events, and other instructional activities. Students will be given the opportunity to register for one of four summer Orientation sessions that will be held at the end of June / mid-July. Students who are unable to attend this summer Orientation session in person will be given a chance to meet virtually one-on-one with their academic advisor before arriving on campus. Additionally, these students will take part in a shortened introductory Orientation before the normal programming begins. However, this virtual engagement along with a shortened introduction was not planned to be officially advertised as an option to take for incoming students, and is currently not presented as an option on the official Orientation webpage¹ as of December 9th, 2024.

The total number of days for Orientation programming during the fall will be decreased, however, the number and length of Orientation activities will remain relatively the same. Orientation programming will begin on Tuesday, 6 days before classes, as opposed to Saturday, 9 days before classes, in previous Orientation programs. Since the new model contains fewer total days during the fall, each day's schedule is more filled with activities than in years past.

The Reach of the Undergraduate Student Government

The Undergraduate Student Government's purpose and direction is to represent the voice of all students at Michigan Tech. We strongly believe that incoming students share the same voice as current students, even if they are not expressly defined as part of the Student Assembly. Incoming students, especially those who have paid their enrollment deposit and are going through the process of becoming current students, deserve an opportunity to be represented and protected, as they soon will be engaged current students.

While most the specifics of the Orientation program are at the discretion of the Wahtera Center for Student Success, the Orientation Staff members delegated to the task of handling the program, and various departments around campus providing content, the Undergraduate Student Government still represents the students that the Orientation program impacts, and we strongly believe in the student input in a change that could have a large impact on incoming students' abilities to connect to the campus community and become comfortable with the environment at Michigan Tech.

We acknowledge that the change made to move from the historical Orientation model towards the newer one is final for the Fall 2025 class of incoming students, and has

¹ <https://www.mtu.edu/success/orientation/undergraduate-orientation>



been made with specific reasoning in mind. However, we also stand behind the undergraduate student body and serve the best interests of the Student Assembly, which includes the actions, analysis, and recommendations provided by the remaining portions of this document. We believe that this report serves the purpose of informing and suggesting a future direction for the Orientation program that will best support the incoming students to Michigan Tech.

Why Current Undergraduates Care

One of the questions that has been raised throughout this process is why students feel strongly about the Orientation model that is implemented at Michigan Tech even though they have already gone through it.

While students have sentimental feelings about their Orientation program and the experiences that they have enjoyed throughout it, that is not the only reason that they have given negative feedback about the changes being made. Many students are financially liable for their education, and care deeply about the well-being and connection of other students.

Many students have put themselves into a position where they bravely share stories about their personal experiences and lives that factored into their college decisions. Many of these stories and experiences feature students who are not in a financially stable enough situation for their Support Packs to be able to come up in the middle of the summer. However, these same students mentioned that they would not have felt as connected or compelled to attend Michigan Tech with this new Orientation program, even with the alternative options of meeting virtually with their academic advisors or attending an abridged version at the beginning of what once was the historical Orientation model. The Orientation model and the participation of current students in their own reflects the Michigan Tech value of Community, where students are inspired to connect with others regardless of their personal wants or needs. Students very much do care about this change as it impacts others who are similar to them, although they will not be required to attend these sessions or pay any extra. The empathy that all of our respondents and emailers showed towards incoming students is a reflection of the effectiveness of the core value of Community alone.

The fact that students are involved in a decision of this level reflects the success of the integration of the core values in the Michigan Tech community; students are under no obligation to feel for or empathize with classes of students that they may never get to see, but they still do anyway. Without any incentive to complete the survey, we had a very high percentage of students fill out the survey and participate in discussion over this decision. Unlike other surveys that the Undergraduate Student Government has conducted, where the outcome of the survey has a direct link to action that could directly impact the entire Student Assembly, this survey did not have a guarantee of change or any form of promised impact on each individual student. Students simply



shared their thoughts about their Orientation experience, and the more passionate students directly wrote in to the Undergraduate Student Government to fill in the blanks where the survey could not reach.

Terminology

Many students are familiar with Orientation-centric terminology, however, we would like to specifically note terminology that may cause confusion.

- Your “Support Pack” refers to your family, relatives, guardians, close friends, or anyone who physically supports you in your journey to Michigan Tech
- “Orientation Staff” refers to any student who is or has been employed by the Wahtera Center for Student Success as an Orientation Team Leader or Orientation Executive Staff member.
- “Orientation Week” refers to the historical Orientation model that was explained above
- A student’s “Orientation Team” refers to the group of 10-25 students that they attended Orientation meetings and activities with.

Overall Survey Results

During the two weeks that the Orientation Review Survey was conducted, **826 responses** were collected through the Google Form. Of these responses, **784 responses** were from individuals who were not currently / have ever been an Orientation Staff member (including Orientation Team Leader and Orientation Executive Staff). For the purposes of further survey analysis, we will **only be reporting the non-Orientation Staff summary** unless otherwise noted. We are making this distinction as we aim to show that the Student Assembly feels passionate about this change, not just individuals who have worked for Orientation in the past.

The survey had reached just under **14%** of the undergraduate Student Assembly across its entire time being open. The survey also reached **14%** of the new undergraduate students².

Survey and Advertising Oversights

Before acknowledging the overall survey results, we must acknowledge oversights as part of our data collection process. These concerns were brought to the attention of the Undergraduate Student Government body by multiple parties, and we feel that it’s necessary to address them.

1. The survey questions were designed to obtain initial feedback from students about how they felt their Orientation program impacted them. Data collected by

² <https://www.mtu.edu/about/facts/>



the Wahtera Center for Student Success or other offices was neither requested nor used.

2. The survey was not initially reviewed in depth by individuals outside of the Student Assembly or Undergraduate Student Government. While we debated different potential interpretations and data points that we wanted to collect, no one from the Wahtera Center for Student Success or Student Affairs reviewed the survey before it was sent to the student body.
 - a. Our purpose as the Undergraduate Student Government in this report is to represent the Student Assembly and fight for causes that concern them. We assert that the survey questions properly serve the Student Assembly in collecting data used for this report.
3. Survey responses, especially on questions asking students to reflect on the ideal length of Orientation, were skewed towards the number of days that students most associate with Michigan Tech's historical Orientation Week program (5 and 7 days). These questions are excluded from the quantitative analysis.
4. Our website advertising received comments regarding misleading language and statements made. We have made and acknowledged the following corrections, but also acknowledge the following engagement results below.
 - a. We acknowledge that while this new program is a large change from the historical Orientation programs, there have been major restructures or changes to the Orientation made in the past. We have removed language indicating that this is an entirely different program.

"We believe that incoming students to Michigan Tech will be impacted the most by this change, as they will be receiving an entirely different Orientation experience from the rest of the undergraduate student body."
 - b. We acknowledge that students will have a similar amount of time with their assigned Orientation Team Leaders, however, we also assert that there will be fewer days for students to connect with their Orientation Team Leaders.

"...they will have less time with their Orientation Team and Orientation Team Leader, which may reduce the opportunities to connect with peers and a mentor, potentially impacting their sense of belonging at Michigan Tech."
 - c. We acknowledge that Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) will have time throughout the beginning portions of the fall Orientation session to host events, however, we assert that the new Orientation program makes student engagement more difficult due to the placement of these time sections. In the proposed schedule for the Fall 2025 Orientation segment, the elective events happen alongside the timeframes for move-in. Incoming students and current students have a greater difficulty at attending these sessions as incoming students are either getting settled into their living environment or spending time with their Support Packs and current students are usually not encouraged to come



to campus until after move-in has concluded.

“Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) at Michigan Tech regularly plan and host recruitment events throughout Orientation Week, and the shortened 3-day Orientation session could impact the effectiveness of recruitment events”

5. The survey described in this report was shared through multiple student leaders to their organizations, potentially containing misleading information about the impact that this new program has for RSOs. The Orientation Review Ad-Hoc Committee has since spoken with these student leaders to achieve a shared understanding of what these changes will result in.
6. The survey respondents potentially had a level of bias when responding to the questions in the survey as they had only gone through the historical Orientation model. However, we assert that the responses indicate a majority of support for the historical model beyond the bias that their experiences may induce.
7. The survey and advertising as a whole were noted to suggest that the change to the Orientation program can be reversed by student input. That is not the case, and this Orientation program is solidified for the Fall 2025 semester. However, we still assert that student input regarding this initial decision was not sought out and that the changes could have a large impact on the student body.
 - a. The Undergraduate Student Government was represented through the Summer Orientation Task Force Committee, giving high-level input on the direction that this new program should take. This committee was sunsetted as of November 5th, 2024
 - b. Survey results, feedback, and general guidance will be provided by the Undergraduate Student Government if a department requests them. This report is a reflection of the data that was collected as a part of this survey, and while the data alone cannot create a switch in a change, it is a way for the Undergraduate Student Government to move forward in addressing the change and making the program as effective as possible for future Michigan Tech students.
8. The survey made use of scales or wording that was generic and could be interpreted subjectively by the reader. For example, in the Quantitative Feedback section, you will see a numerical question that asks students to rate a factor of the historical model from 1-10. However, we also believe that these scales are generally understood, as reflected by students who emailed in Qualitative Feedback voicing their support for the historical Orientation model.

Confidence in Survey Results

The Undergraduate Student Government implemented several measures to ensure confidence in the survey responses it received. We have verified the survey responses as to ensure that we are getting the most accurate representation of the undergraduate student population.



1. All respondents had to be individuals with Michigan Tech emails by signing into their Google account
 - a. Survey respondents were only allowed to respond once to the survey, and any attempt to revisit the survey would direct them to a page indicating that the survey had already been completed
2. We verified that no respondents marked themselves both a first-year and a past Orientation Staff member (which would not be possible due to their class standing).
3. We verified that all of the verified Orientation Staff members who filled out the survey answered honestly to the question regarding their previous employment as an Orientation Staff member. No Orientation Staff members were mistakenly included in the primary quantitative analysis.
 - a. In our internal discussions with previous Orientation Team Leaders and Orientation Executive Staff members, there is a prevalent bias that's opposed to these changes throughout previous staff members. We ensured that no known former staff members were included in the primary analysis.
4. Distribution of the survey by the Undergraduate Student Government was performed non-discriminately, either through mass-communication methods or by encouraging individuals who viewed the changes positively, negatively, or mildly to participate. The survey was also designed to collect a variety of student opinions.

Engagement Results

In reviewing the impacts of the survey, our advertisements, and the overall impression put on the Student Assembly as a result of our efforts, we feel that it is necessary to analyze the engagement of 3 key aspects of the survey.

Website Hits

Concerns regarding advertising language and bias were presented in association with the website. The website in question was located at <https://usg.mtu.edu/oweeek>. For all intents and purposes of minimizing any testing data, we will be only considering the data from **October 29th, 2024** to **November 11th, 2024**, which was the timespan in which we received responses for the survey with it being open. All other visits before this timespan were instances of Undergraduate Student Government members visiting the website to confirm the information.

The data taken on website hits is from the **cPanel** instance hosting the Undergraduate Student Government website.

October 2024 Monthly Hits for /oweeek: 374 visits



November 2024 Monthly Hits for /oweeek: 88 visits

Thus, we can conclude that **not all survey respondents** reviewed the website before making an informed response. This is important in analyzing the survey results due to the concerns brought up regarding misleading language on the website. While some respondents may have visited the website before taking the survey, many students did not visit or view the webpage with the content of concern. In addition, we must consider all external factors that go into the above hit count:

- Orientation Review Ad-Hoc Committee members making changes to the website content and reviewing the result
- Undergraduate Student Government members reviewing the website content
- External departments and reviewers providing feedback about the website language

Feedback on the Changes

Quantitative Feedback

In our Orientation Program Student Survey, we had a variety of different questions, mainly focusing on the sentiments of the historical Orientation model throughout the various classes of students. As stated before, we will only be featuring the non-Orientation Staff in this section. The total number of respondents that fit this cohort is **784**, or **13.2%** of the Student Assembly (based on a total of 5,903 undergraduate students³).

The questions are formatted to gain the opinion of students on the historical model. The Orientation Review Ad-Hoc Committee made the decision not to ask questions regarding a potential Orientation model due to the leading nature of those questions along with the unknown future for the newly introduced Orientation model. Thus, we cannot **directly compare the historical model with the new model** without supporting data from the new model of Orientation. However, the assertions that we make in each of our questions look at addressing what we can analyze about the historical model.

The survey respondents are broken down as follows, with a summary of non-1st years being placed into its own separate column at the right-hand side of the table:

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Respondents	228	215	176	127	38	556

³ <https://www.mtu.edu/about/facts/>



% of Total	29.08%	27.42%	22.45%	16.20%	4.85%	70.92%
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We believe that splitting up the categories of this survey into **1st Year** and **Non-1st Year** provides an accurate representation of how students may look at their Orientation experience considering time.

We understand that changes have been made to the Orientation programming throughout all 5-6 years of students who have taken this survey. For instance, the inclusion of a single program or “feature” of Orientation for one class year may have resulted in more positive or negative responses for a certain question. However, we believe that these minor variations between Orientation programs accounts for the minor variations present in the survey results and percentages.

However, as you will see below, there is a consistently **more positive outlook** on the historical Orientation program by the more tenured students. This could be for a multitude of reasons, but we attribute the observation of time as one of the primary reasons.

“To what extent were you able to connect with your peers and campus community during your Orientation program?” (On a scale from 1-10, with the highest being 10)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Average	7.48	8.18	8.34	8.01	8.18	8.19
Median	8.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	10.00	9.00
STDEV	2.61	2.44	2.35	2.43	2.99	2.45
% >= 7/10	71.93%	82.33%	81.82%	77.17%	81.58%	80.94%

An overwhelming majority reported positive feelings in regard to how they felt connected with their peers and the campus community with the historical Orientation program. The historical Orientation model excels in connecting students to the campus community and others around them. Only a portion of Orientation is focused on getting students engaged with their academics and understanding how the university works, but the other, and arguably the most difficult aspect is connecting students with one another in a meaningful way. Academic and policy information can be thrown out in a presentation towards students, but establishing connections between the incoming students, their Husky identity, and the entire Michigan Tech community comes from careful planning of activities, engagement techniques, and exposure to activities that empower students to connect themselves. Once again, this does not mean that this won’t continue in the new Orientation model, but as we explore later on, there are fewer investments in this “social value” of Orientation.



We do acknowledge and understand that some students were not engaged with their Orientation Teams, or their Orientation Team Leaders did not put in the effort to engage them sufficiently. However, that seems to be a small fraction of the entire Student Assembly that had that experience.

“To what extent did your Orientation program prepare you for classes?” (On a scale from 1-10, with the highest being 10)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Average	6.58	6.71	7.11	6.28	6.92	6.75
Median	7.00	7.00	8.00	7.00	7.50	7.00
STDEV	2.41	2.49	2.25	2.32	2.45	2.39
% >= 7/10	60.96%	58.60%	70.45%	53.54%	65.79%	61.69%

This question received less overwhelmingly positive support on the side of the historical Orientation program. The clear relationship to identify here is that students feel that the historical Orientation program did more for connecting students to their peers and the campus community than it did to prepare them for their classes. In the direct quotes provided later on in this report, many students emphasize the sentimental and interpersonal importance of the historical model, but note the ineffectiveness of some of the programs or overall length of content.

Multiple aspects of the new Orientation program (and various campus initiatives) are focused on addressing this issue. The new Orientation program will have a summer session that is dedicated to connecting students to their academic departments in a depth greater than what they received in the historical model. However, this is also being addressed in the new Essential Education model through Michigan Tech.

“If any, how many other Orientation programs did you attend apart from Michigan Tech's?”

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Average	0.75	0.93	0.88	0.73	0.71	0.86
Median	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
STDEV	1.42	1.52	1.43	1.29	1.49	1.44
% = 0	72.44%	66.35%	65.50%	70.49%	74.29%	67.54%
% = 0 or 1	79.11%	73.56%	74.27%	77.87%	80.00%	75.19%



This question was intended to collect data on the aspect of “Orientation shopping” that was provided as a reason for changing Orientation. The Undergraduate Student Government on record has no official reason for why this change was made, but reasons such as “Orientation shopping” were offered as a way to understand the change.

From this question alone, we assert that “Orientation shopping” amongst Michigan Tech students is not a major issue that needs to be addressed, as there is no significant trend in the number of Orientation programs that a student attended. The design of this question is also useful, as this data is the “worst-case scenario”. Some students filling out the survey may have been confused by the question and would have understood this as the number of open house programs that they attended. We tried to avoid this confusion by stating in the description: “By Orientation programs, we are referring to campus activities that engage you as an active student who is a part of their campus community.”

“Are you still in contact, or are still friends, with members of your Orientation Team?”

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Yes	188	160	128	82	27	397
No	37	48	43	40	8	139
% Yes	83.56%	76.92%	74.85%	67.21%	77.14%	74.07%

This question was intended to observe the connection between the first analyzed question and how the historical Orientation model actually assisted with that. As expected, the ratio of students staying in contact with their Orientation Team members is smaller as they go further throughout their college careers. However, we are surprised that this high of a ratio is reported to still be connected with their Orientation Team members, especially being very far from when they actually participated in Orientation.

From this question, we can determine and assert the effectiveness of the historical model’s constant connection between Orientation Teams and allowing them to build meaningful relationships. We believe that the shortened model would impact this relationship development, as there is a large “speed bump” that can be traversed socially before breaking down discomfort in a room of strangers. The historical model constantly exposed Orientation Team members to each other on a daily basis, allowing them to become more comfortable with one another and form connections that went outside of the Orientation Week programming. This could be in the form of a first friendship used as a “social springboard” into the campus community, or connections that are more meaningful and long-term.



“What were the most valuable aspects of Orientation to you?”

For this question, respondents were able to pick 1-6 of the provided options in no particular order. For the purposes of presenting this data, we’ve shown the percentage of students in a cohort who opted to vote for a specific option as one of their choices.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Academic Advising	60.96%	51.63%	43.75%	37.80%	39.47%	45.14%
Campus Tour	45.61%	57.67%	72.16%	62.20%	71.05%	64.21%
Social events to meet other students	71.05%	81.40%	84.66%	85.04%	84.21%	83.45%
Information about campus resources	59.21%	73.49%	73.86%	68.50%	78.95%	72.84%
University policy and procedure information	39.47%	41.40%	47.16%	40.16%	57.89%	44.06%
Team Meetings	43.86%	34.42%	31.82%	25.20%	34.21%	31.47%

In analyzing this data across all of the respondents, we found that the most surprising statistic was the fact that “Team Meetings” was the option least voted for, and “Academic Advising” was the second least voted option (in the Non-1st category, it is the third least voted option).

We do acknowledge that the makeup of the historical Orientation model did include some sessions that were redundant or had a lot of variability. Most notably, the Team Meetings are seen as the least valuable factor of a student’s Orientation experience across the board. However, we also acknowledge the low value of the Academic Advising sessions, and pose the question of the value of those same sessions in the newer Orientation model.

Not surprisingly, the “Social events to meet other students” had the highest value amongst all cohorts of students. Students generally tend to enjoy events and programs that intend to engage students in ways beyond just understanding policy or their academic program. This also reflects many of the qualitative pieces of feedback that we’ve received from students, where they note that they enjoyed Orientation Week for the social benefits that it provided. Once again, we assert the effectiveness of the historical Orientation model as a social development tool amongst new students, both for their peers and the campus community.

“What were the most valuable aspects of Orientation to you?”

For this question, respondents were able to pick 1-5 of the provided options in no particular order. For the purposes of presenting this data, we’ve shown the percentage



of students in a cohort who opted to vote for a specific option as one of their choices. In the original survey, “Team Meetings” was not provided as an option.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Academic Advising	61.40%	51.16%	44.32%	39.37%	28.95%	44.78%
Campus Tour	39.47%	45.12%	53.41%	48.82%	50.00%	48.92%
Social events to meet other students	75.00%	81.86%	82.95%	81.89%	78.95%	82.01%
Information about campus resources	57.46%	65.12%	66.48%	57.48%	60.53%	63.49%
University policy and procedure information	31.58%	30.23%	31.82%	25.20%	36.84%	30.04%

We believe that this question pairs wonderfully with the previous ones, as it gives us a sense of what priorities that students have for Orientation factors alongside with what they value. While the individual values of this table are hard to discern interpretations from, if we compare it to the values in the previous table, we can see which factors have a much higher prioritization rather than value. We cannot make any solid interpretations on where the source of these discrepancies come from, as there could be many confounding factors in the different Orientation programs.

“How would your social life be different if Orientation Week was shorter?”

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th+	Non-1st
Better	23	8	2	2	3	15
Same	42	30	28	19	0	77
Worse	119	145	110	72	27	354
Unsure	41	25	31	29	5	90
% Worse	52.89%	69.71%	64.33%	59.02%	77.14%	66.04%

This question may stand out to have a clear conclusion from the data, but there are a few different interpretations that could come from each answer. Students who answered “Better” could be interpreting the shortened Orientation Week as an opportunity for more free time. Students who answered “Worse” could’ve interpreted their answer as a major loss of social engagement with the Michigan Tech community. The question had no clarifying description or information on what a shortened Orientation Week would look like in terms of content or timeline, and thus students were left to make their own interpretations.



Quantitatively, the large result that we can attain from this question is that the majority of students feel that a shorter Orientation Week would've impacted their social life negatively. We cannot discern any information from the exact percentages or differences between class years, as students' feelings are entirely subjective, often depending on an individual's own experience during their Orientation program.

We do believe that this question supplements the question about whether or not students were connected with individuals from their Orientation Teams very well. With the majority of individuals from each class year indicating that they are still in contact with members from their Orientation Team, we do have reason to believe that the impact of the Orientation Teams is much larger than just a support structure for the first semester in college. While Orientation Teams are built from students of the same major, that only includes around 10-30 students at once led by one Orientation Team Leader. Some students even make the move to apply to become an Orientation Team Leader in their 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or even 5th years at Michigan Tech due to the continued impact that they believe Orientation Teams

We do understand and acknowledge that the removal of some programs from the historical Orientation model does reflect the feedback given to the Wahtera Center after the conclusion of the last few Orientation programs. However, we assert that the connection that students develop in their Orientation Teams ascends beyond the quality and personal interpretation of the specific sessions that students attend. Students are able to make and maintain connections through time and the experiences that they share together. Cutting down the number of days that students interact with their Orientation Team and Orientation Team Leaders potentially has the ability to impact this connection that has been developed between peers in the historical model, and even though efforts are being made to improve the overall quality of the Orientation programming, it doesn't necessarily improve the connection that students create with the campus community.

“Do you feel you benefited from a full week of Orientation?”

Qualitative Feedback

The Undergraduate Student Government received **24 emails** from students, student leaders, and alumni regarding these Orientation changes. Our advertisements encouraged students to send their comments into the usg@mtu.edu inbox.

We do have to acknowledge the nature of these individuals' emailing generally means that their feedback is more engaged and full of personal opinion than students who may feel more neutral about these changes. An individual writing to us means that they have something they want to say, whereas everyone who hasn't written to us does



not have these same feelings that they want to share, doesn't know to email us, or just simply forgot.

Respondent's Survey Engagement

We do want to note the survey engagement of those who sent emails in. We believe that 24 responses are enough to anonymously represent this group of passionate students. To protect the identities of these students who wrote in, we will not be releasing or ordering the below feedback given in any particular way, and the original email content will not be released.

Of the 24 students who emailed USG directly, only 19 of those students responded to the survey. Below, we are detailing the summary of these students (**Emailed In**) in comparison to the **1st Year** and **Non-1st Year** cohorts explained above. Please note that the summary of students here may not be a subset of the two comparing cohorts.

	1st	Non-1st	Emailed In
(Connection w/ Peers / Community 1-10) Average	7.48	8.19	9.11
(Preparation for Classes 1-10) Average	6.58	6.75	8.16
(Connected with Orientation Team Members) % Yes	83.56%	74.07%	84.21%
(Number of Other Orientation Programs) % = 0	72.44%	67.54%	78.95%
(Social Life if Shorter O-Week) % Worse	52.89%	66.04%	84.21%

Direct Quotes

While we would like to summarize the consensus of emails that we received, we also understand that it is important to provide direct quotes that students sent in. All of these quotes were approved by the students who made them, but we have removed any individual names or potentially identifiable information. We will be referencing the quote numbers (and specific lines from the quotes), but due to the elaborate nature of some of the emailed thoughts, we've included them in **Appendix I** for further reading.

All students who emailed in were given a response from an Undergraduate Student Government representative that expressed gratitude for the student providing their input, specific comments noting parts of their feedback, and an encouragement to keep them involved and sharing out the survey.

General Feedback Given

- A student pointed out that the survey questions were biased, and they were not able to express their negative feelings on the change of Orientation in the Google Form



- Students pointed out that they received meaningful connections with their peers and Orientation Team Leaders, which affected their ability to fit into the Michigan Tech community
 - A student mentioned that more personal and deeper questions were had with their Orientation Team Leaders as the week progressed (Quote 2)
- A student acknowledged that the notion of “Orientation shopping” did not apply to them when they sought out a place to study at (Quote 4)
- Multiple students mentioned that the length of Orientation Week allowed them to branch out into recreational and optional activities to meet new people and find their interests (Quote 1, Quote 5, and Quote 6)
 - Students mentioned that they were able to connect with their hallways effectively throughout Orientation Week, as there was plenty of time for them to get to know the people around them (Quote 6)
 - *To clarify, the length of Orientation Week changing impacts the move-in day, which shortens the amount of time that you have to interact with your hallway and the campus community. All hall activities are kept in the new Orientation program*
- A former Orientation Team Leader wrote that they believe the shortening of the timeframe in which students receive the content (such as campus information or anything else found in the required activities) will result in a lower retention of that information. They mentioned that students are already exhausted from the number of presentations and information given to them throughout the week, and the shorter timeframe won’t be any better (Quote 10).
 - They, amongst other students, mentioned that the new Orientation model does nothing to separate the university from others and present something unique.
- Students mentioned that the move-in window would impose a hardship on their Support Packs, whereas the traditional move-in weekend gave that flexibility and only required one set of days to be taken off (Quote 1, Quote 5, and Quote 7)
 - A student mentioned the logistical difficulties in having returning students move in during what once was Orientation Week and potential traffic issues (Quote 3)
 - *To clarify, the concern expressed is the introduction of another set of dates for Support Packs to support their students over the summer. Sending a student to college is a huge event in a parent’s life, and it’s almost assumed that this will create hardships and time taken off for any university. However, the new Orientation model introduces a second set of dates that requires Support Packs to take off work and travel, which simply isn’t feasible for some working Support Packs.*
- A student calculated the estimated cost for them to get up to campus one way through gas (\$68.40 one way), which would be added onto the additional cost of missing work from attending the summer sessions. In addition to the cost of

Orientation itself, this would be a larger expected expense for students or Support Packs to pay (Quote 9).

- *To clarify, the original presentation of the new Orientation model given to the Undergraduate Student Government indicated that Support Packs will be required to find their own lodging in Fall 2025, while plans to use available residence hall space to accommodate Support Packs could be possible in future years. This would in turn incur additional cost beyond the travel cost that this student is mentioning.*
- 5 of our respondents specifically noted the financial hardships that the additional Orientation session would incur on them or their Support Packs. These students note that expecting students to foot this additional cost is unacceptable. (Quote 1, Quotes 8.1 & 8.2, and Quote 9)
- **13** responses either stated that they oppose the decision and/or had a call to action to the Undergraduate Student Government or university administration to reconsider or reverse the change that was made
 - *To clarify, the responses not included in this count still had negative opinions regarding the change, but did not state in writing that they outright oppose the change or ask for a reconsideration of these changes*
 - The Fall 2025 Orientation will reflect the changes noted in this report, however, future feedback received in combination with this report can lead to change and appropriate modification of the Orientation program to best introduce students to the university

Interpretation

Almost all of the feedback written to the Undergraduate Student Government's email does not view the changes to the Orientation program positively. There were some individuals who indicated that Orientation Week could face a couple of changes to improve the quality for incoming students, but noted that the change made does not achieve that goal. While we have no direct connection between the students who emailed in and the students who have taken the survey and shared their quantitative feedback (except for the table presented above), we can discern a couple of representations from the student who have emailed in:

- Students who live over 4 hours away from Michigan Tech (including those in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, lower parts of Wisconsin, and the rest of the country / world)
- Students who have Support Packs who are constantly working and do not have the easily ability to work virtually or take frequent time off
- Students who are put under the financial strain of paying for their tuition along with any additional costs that come along with attending college
 - Michigan Tech has the 6th highest average per year net cost out of all public universities in the state of Michigan, at a total net cost of



\$17,928⁴. Michigan Tech is not a cheap school to attend, and despite the generous scholarships, additional costs incurred by travel and other expenses are not easy to foot, especially for lower income Support Packs.

Orientation Team Leaders

One significant demographic that was surveyed was past Orientation Team Leaders. In order to avoid biased data, these members were excluded from the previous results, but their info will be summarized here.

	1st	Non-1st	Staff
(Connection w/ Peers / Community 1-10) Average	7.48	8.19	8.90
(Preparation for Classes 1-10) Average	6.58	6.75	7.38
(Connected with Orientation Team Members) % Yes	83.56%	74.07%	85.71%
(Number of Other Orientation Programs) % = 0	72.44%	67.54%	73.81%
(Social Life if Shorter O-Week) % Worse	52.89%	66.04%	66.67%

From the data above, we can see that Orientation Staff have a higher score for the preparedness for classes and engagement with the campus community from the historical Orientation. However, this could be due to a multitude of factors, including the fact that Orientation Staff are going through the program multiple times, but each additional time, they are strategizing how to connect their students to the campus community and prepare them for life at Michigan Tech.

The other 3 statistics don't have major differences, and lack any reason for a higher ratio of staff members other than implicit bias due to their previous experience with the Orientation program.

External University Feedback

As part of the efforts to analyze the change in a fair and unbiased nature, the Undergraduate Student Government reached out to other student governments with the following two main topics:

1. The nature and perception of the university's Orientation, and the journey that it has gone through in the last few years
2. The nature of the student government's relationship with their administration, and their thoughts regarding shared governance

In total, the Orientation Review Ad-Hoc Committee reached out to **18** different student governments from universities across the Midwest. As a result, the committee only

⁴ <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=MI&ct=1&pg=2&id=171128#netprc>



received **4 responses** and **3 acknowledgements** from the following universities with their responses included in **Appendix II**.

- Lake Superior State University
- Central Michigan University (CMU)
- Wayne State University
- Oakland University
- *University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, University of Michigan - Dearborn, and Michigan State University all acknowledged our initial contact, but did not respond to any of our questions*

In our observations of the external university feedback, we did find that there is a significant difference in how universities view the Orientation experience and what is best for each individual university. Our original expectation for speaking with these universities was a luke-warm or negative view of the summer Orientation programs, however, from the representatives that we spoke to, we found that the summer orientation programs worked well, with the following asterisks.

- It was noted that the virtual programs in the summer program required significantly more attention than the in-person programs
- It was noted that many students attending the summer programs did not have a large travel requirement. We believe that the nature of Michigan Tech being over 4 hours away for most students does make it more difficult to justify the in-person summer component

Summary and Further Action

Suggestions on Future Orientation

In our observations, we have reached the conclusion that the historical Orientation model is in many ways very strong and effective at engaging students into the campus community, but could have various improvements that create a connection between students and their academic pursuits. While we cannot compare for certain the historical Orientation model and the new Orientation model fairly, we do want to place an emphasis on the strongest points of the historical Orientation model that do improve the student experience at Michigan Tech.

Firstly, in our advocating for the best of the Student Assembly, we recommend that the advertising for the summer sessions of Orientation is reconsidered. Multiple students have expressed financial insecurity through our qualitative feedback, and we believe that the model proposed creates additional hidden costs without clearly showing the option to participate in the abridged “summer” session during their Fall segment. Assuming that a student’s Support Pack does travel with them to Houghton



during the summer, the additional cost for travel and lodging could be in the hundreds of dollars per Support Pack, which is not covered by the base Orientation charge. Multiple universities offering a similar new Orientation structure also offer the virtual option as an up-front opportunity (CMU⁵, Wayne State University⁶, and Eastern Michigan University⁷) or as the only option (Michigan State University⁸), and given our unique geographic location and higher net cost for students, we believe that Michigan Tech should opt to actively offer and advertise a virtual option. We also observed many universities that had direct and clear instructions to contact admissions if they cannot make the in-person segment (University of Detroit Mercy⁹).

One point that we've consistently seen throughout the data analyzed is the social value of the historical Orientation model. Without exact analysis and questioning regarding the source of this "social value", we cannot determine if this is a result of the structure of the historical Orientation model or not. Based on experiences of our respondents and personal analysis from our committee, we can analyze the social value sources that have occurred in the historical Orientation model.

- Connection to one's own Orientation Team (direct product)
- Connection to one's own residence hall (direct product)
- Connection to others through major social events (direct product)
- Connection to others through advertised non-sponsored events (direct product)
 - This includes optional events scattered throughout the schedule of the historical Orientation model, including RSO or department hosted events
- Exploration of campus with Orientation Team (secondary product)
- Freedom to branch out and connect with others (secondary product)
 - This is as a result of the spread-out schedule on a couple of days, where students have plenty of time to branch out to others through unofficial means

We strongly recommend a focus for Orientation 2025 and beyond on the social aspects of the Orientation program, and more focused development on actively creating opportunities for students to connect to the campus community. One major concern that the Undergraduate Student Government has observed throughout the semester is a lack of direction on how to engage incoming students with the university or campus community. We believe that this factor of Orientation has the **highest** return on investment based on our survey results, and see it as a key factor that cannot be ignored in the revamping of the program. We also strongly recommend that specific

⁵ <https://www.cmich.edu/offices-departments/new-student-orientation/freshman-students>

⁶

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240727041016/https://wayne.edu/orientation/first-year-students> (web archive provided for Fall 2024 Orientation information)

⁷ <https://www.emich.edu/orientation/soar/index.php>

⁸ <https://orientation.msu.edu/transfer/upcoming-semester/new-student-orientation/>

⁹ <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/orientation/soar/index.php>



feedback collection on social engagement should be performed at the conclusion of the Fall 2025 Orientation to observe the high-level differences between the historical Orientation model and the new Orientation model.

We recommend the establishment of an Orientation 2025 Forum, where students and critical Orientation Staff / involved departments are able to share opinions and outlet their Orientation experiences to build a more effective program that benefits the new students. We have observed many trends and strong points of Orientation through both our qualitative and quantitative data, but the power for making specific recommendations lies in the hands of the individual members of the Student Assembly.

Observing Additional and Future Feedback

Orientation will continue to be refined for years to come, and feedback will be collected about these future Orientation programs. The Undergraduate Student Government has worked on the Summer Orientation Task Force committee to assist in developing survey questions for new students and Support Packs to share their feedback about the new Orientation program in an objective manner.

While we have an expectation of the feedback that will be received from parents and students regarding their Orientation experience, we do understand the importance of the prevailing opinion. The Undergraduate Student Government will support any additional feedback given about the Orientation programs in the future, and will continue to fight for the voice of the Student Assembly and appropriate representation of that voice in various decisions, advocacies, and concerns.

Student Assembly Involvement

In observing, researching, and reviewing the change to the Orientation program, one clear point of improvement that we recommend is the increase in interaction between academic departments, the Michigan Tech administration, and the Student Assembly in large changes that potentially affects the campus community as a whole. The Undergraduate Student Government stands firm that this change has the potential to impact many students on campus, and how new students engage with the campus community entirely. We cannot say for certain how or if an impact will be made, but the risk that major changes impose is too great for decisions to be made without any student input or involvement. In essence, Michigan Tech is possible because of the students, and while there are many impactful staff members supporting the success of the Student Assembly, it is not acceptable to leave out the population that makes this university able to thrive.

The Undergraduate Student Government will work towards establishing a common agreement of shared governance between itself and the Michigan Tech administration.



Our goal is not to slow down the process of change, but involve more voices in a civil and powerful manner. In addition, the implementation of an agreed shared governance policy between these two bodies will potentially increase the confidence of students in their own university and government body, encouraging them to bring up more concerns and suggestions for the good of the university.



Appendix I - Email Quotes

These quotes were taken directly from the Undergraduate Student Government email as **24** students emailed to share their feedback about the new Orientation program.

We've gotten direct permission from all of these students to share their words to support the arguments made in this report, however, to protect the identities of the student, their major, and their clubs, we've omitted any names, organization names, or specific identifying majors from their responses. These quotes are in no particular order of date, importance, student name, or any other sort. They will be referenced in the above report, but have been included in this separate section due to the length.

Many of the emails also referenced the shortened time for RSOs that was advertised. As we've discussed that this was a mistake in our advertising for the survey, we've removed these comments from the quotes as they do not have solid ground.

Quote 1: *"I live 8.5 hours away from campus, and I work multiple jobs during the summer. My parents both work full-time, and we heavily rely on every bit of income we can get. If I had been required to visit Tech during the summer, I would have been seriously impacted. My parents have to use their time off sparingly, and I have 4 siblings that can't just be left at home for several days by themselves. We couldn't have afforded to spend money for a hotel twice in the same summer, and the impact of all three of us taking time off would have seriously screwed our financials."*

I loved how long orientation was. I had never toured campus before (because of my financial status), and getting the chance to settle in and figure out how everything worked was invaluable. I genuinely cannot think of a good enough reason to change the way Orientation works, and I hope for the sake of future students like me you'll reconsider."

Quote 2: *"As an OTL, as the week goes on, students tend to open up a lot and ask a lot of the more personal or deep questions later on in the week. I think these conversations are incredibly important in helping students feel safe and welcome at the school, and with less time to get to know team leads, they would not feel comfortable enough to have them."*

Quote 3: *"...I am someone who cares for the environment. Adding an additional trip this far north for every freshman family would not only put a strain on local roadway congestion, but also increase the carbon footprint caused by this school. I went to this school believing they actually gave a damn about the earth around them, please do not make me lose faith in your leadership."*



Quote 4: *"I strongly disagree about the notion that students are "shopping around" during O-Weeks, especially MTU students. Assuming it was true, Michigan Tech is located so far out of the way that it is a nightmare to get to, and if they split O-Week to be over the summer, all it would result in is students never visiting campus and then going to another school where they actually could feasibly attend their O-Week. Nevertheless, our enrollment is growing faster than we have capacity for, and I personally find this a mute point."*

Quote 5: *"My Orientation Week was in the Fall of 2020, which was the height of Covid. With online classes, I didn't meet many people outside of my dorm hall during the school year. However, most of the friends I did make, most of whom are still my best friends to this day, I met during Orientation Week, either at organized events or just playing frisbee on Walker lawn while the weather was nice and we didn't have homework. Importantly, this was my primary way of meeting people in different majors, including Forestry, Chemistry, Biology, and Mechanical Engineering...which got significantly harder in the years to come once social groups formed, even after the switch back to in-person classes. O-Week was undoubtedly invaluable in helping me forge connections and meet new people that were an integral part of my MTU experience, regardless of the pandemic (since O-week was largely outside and seemed to be minimally affected by Covid).*

...

I am aware that I don't have any direct stake in what happens with Orientation week, but from my experience and within my own opinion, I would say that having spare time during Orientation week to meet other students and make connections is irreplaceable. I would agree that Orientation could stand to be shorter (3 days is probably plausible) but it would require awkward timing with move-ins that is infeasible for people who work during the weeks and can't take a Monday through Wednesday off to move their child up to Tech. Having a full week lets both the freshmen move in and other students returning (often with their parents helping drive them/their stuff) both happen on weekends, and importantly on two separate weekends, to lessen traffic and lighten the load on hotels.

I also would say that if there had been a two-day summer session circa July, it wouldn't have been worth the 9 hour drive both ways to get to and from, which basically requires two weekdays of travel time for myself and my parents. I can't see my past self going to a summer session, since I worked on weekends and I didn't have a vehicle to get up to MTU by myself (or parents who would let me do that). Considering how most of the undergraduate population comes from something like 5 hours away or more, I can't imagine that most of the new students would be able to make such a session without it causing a lot of strain."



Quote 6: *“I believe that O-Week was a pivotal part of my time as a Husky. Michigan Tech is for me what it is for many students - far from home. This means that for many students, the typical safety net of high school is gone. They don't have their parents, their siblings, family friends, coworkers, high school friends, or most other people that would hold significance in a student's life. The duration of O-Week is a perfect amount of time for students to adjust to life on their own, meet new people, and establish some safety nets of their own before classes start.*

O-Week provides many opportunities to do this. You meet with your RA and the other members of your hall, the O-Week groups are made up of other people in your major so you share classes with them, and there's plenty of non-required activities for you to meet other people around campus. I don't see how this is possible with a shortened O-Week. I believe it would make everything feel rushed, giving students only a couple of days to adjust to life on campus, before coursework is piled on onto everything else.

Students who live out of state or out of the country may not be able to spend the time or money to go to Tech during the summer to have their asynchronous Orientation. Besides, what impact does it have to go up for a weekend in June, just to go back home for two months and forget everything come August? Very few other students will be there, even fewer of them would share your major. I imagine a world where first year students arrive the Friday before classes start knowing absolutely nobody, having no routines in place, and having to just jump right in come Monday.

...

O-Week was a pivotal part of my own, and others, Husky Experience. It's just as much a part of this campus as the Husky statue standing tall in its center, and I think it would be a travesty to see it removed or shortened in any capacity.

Looking at the changes on the website, it's clear that this is a decision that comes from University Leadership, not the USG. As usual, the reasoning is unclear and unprovided. It's my hope that the USG can pass on my frustrations, and the frustrations of student's like me, to ensure that University Leadership is listening to the student body. They seem to be rather resilient to this idea, and so I wish the USG luck, and thank them for all the work that they do to make the lives of myself and my fellow students better. Thank you.”

Quote 7: *“The other reason why I disagree with the changes is because having a summer session requires making an additional trip to Houghton. I live in northern Illinois, and it is around an 8-hour drive from my hometown to Tech. It was not easy to make time to drive to campus and find somewhere to stay for the weekend. Having to make two separate trips, especially if my parents would have had to stay for longer the first time to drive me home again, would have been much more difficult. I also know quite a few people who live further away*



from Houghton, and making two trips for them would have been next to impossible, and so they would have gone elsewhere. I know there will be “virtual sessions” for those who can’t make the trip, but I doubt the effectiveness of those sessions would be very good. I would assume there would be a lot of students unable to attend because they live too far away, and I don’t think there would be enough support for those students.”

Quote 8.1: *“Will Tech be paying for us to stay here over the summer? I already can barely afford to go to school here, much less pay for somewhere to stay over orientation week. What about the people who live hours away?”*

USG Response to Quote 8.1: *“Thanks for reaching out. From what the Undergraduate Student Government has been informed of and given for this change, students will not be reimbursed for expenses incurred during the summer trip. However, we do want to point out that students will be able to stay in the residence halls during their summer session. For Fall 2025, Support Packs will need to find lodging on their own, but in future years, opportunities to use East Hall for family housing may arise.*

No official word has been given on what support is available for students who live many hours away.”

Quote 8.2: *“[I’m] sorry but that’s not right. I’m relying on a government who hates me to go to school here. we cannot afford this. What kind of example is this setting? This puts lower social economic[sic] status students last and completely disregards costs around here.”*

Quote 9: *“I, like many other students, are from Southern Michigan...And the drive from my parents to campus is 570 miles long. This trip can take anywhere from 8.5 to 10 hours. Many students are from the Detroit area and using Livonia, a large suburb of Detroit, as an example, the drive to campus is 548 miles according to Google Maps. This means orientation would require many students to do two full days of driving to attend only two days of orientation. This adds extra stress and cost for students. I got gas yesterday at a Krist and gas was \$3.03/gallon. Using my car’s average of 25 miles per gallon and the 570 mile drive to get to campus I would spend \$68.40 in gas one way. This extra cost doesn’t include housing or lost wages from taking four days off of work.*

Additionally, I am paying part of my college tuition myself. To do this I worked in food service throughout high school, including the summer in between my senior year of high school and freshman year of college. Weekends are when food services are their busiest and are some of the best times to get shifts. With orientation now overlapping with a weekend and requiring students to take off more time to drive to and from summer orientation, students risk losing large chunks of income that would need to pay their future college expenses.



...

My first O-Week was not only super informational and convenient, it's also where I meant my current boyfriend and hopefully future husband. It's where an orientation group discord server became a hub for friends and it is still incredibly active three years after. Every year I move back to Tech early in O-week so I can participate in O-week events like Film Noard's Movie Night and A Taste of Tech Traditions."

Quote 10: *"...I believe that shortening O-Week would be incredibly detrimental. Students are already exhausted by the number of presentations and information given to them throughout the week, and shortening the time in which that information is shared will probably result in very little of it being retained. Student orgs will be heavily impacted, since there will be much less time to advertise to new students.*

...

In addition, expecting families to drive up here twice in the summer is utterly ridiculous. That would force families to find lodging two different times, take nearly a week off from work, summer classes, or summer vacations, and make the long trek up here. At that point, there is no reason to split the Orientation into two separate sessions, which will deprive many students the chance to be OTLs, which is a position I have benefitted from many times over.

College is overwhelming. I was proud to tell anyone who asked that Michigan Tech allows students a whole week to settle into the area and the university. Shortening O-Week is not going to set the university apart from any others and will have a negative impact on the knowledge of incoming students concerning the university. If possible, I strongly encourage fighting against this decision."



Appendix II - Other Universities

This appendix is to include the additional responses and notes from conversations with other universities. Not all of these follow the same format, as some were performed over the email, some are still awaiting response, and some were conducted as a virtual interview.

We received acknowledgements from the following universities, but did not receive any additional information from them:

- University of Michigan - Ann Arbor
 - *Ongoing conversations with the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor are occurring on the topic of shared governance and the proper steps to move forward with. One of our committee members spoke at a Central Student Government meeting about the issue that we are facing, and asked for initial advice on what we could proceed with.*
- University of Michigan - Dearborn
- Michigan State University

Lake Superior State University

LSSU gave us an emailed response to our questions below.

How involved are students in the Orientation planning, Orientation execution, and Orientation review (e.g. collecting feedback, performing reflections, and making future-year decisions) at Lake Superior State University?

“The students at LSSU currently have no involvement in the orientation process. I’m assuming you mean college visits based on the rest of this email. Our University orientation starts very shortly before classes begin, and all those attending are registered students at LSSU.”

It has been cited that there is a phenomenon of “Orientation Shopping” occurring amongst new college students, where students attend multiple Orientation programs and determine their enrollment based on the quality of their experience. Is this a phenomenon that Lake Superior State University recognizes as an issue?”

As a follow-up, if Lake Superior State University observes this phenomenon, do you believe the Orientation program is structured in a way to introduce the university under the pretense that students might not choose to attend the university?



“I don't know if I speak for the entire University when I say this, but I don't believe orientation shopping is an issue because students should get a feel for the environments they're possibly going to spend several years within before they make a final decision. I know our orientation program is strong because our recruitment rates are higher for students who visited campus prior to making their decision, so I don't believe our orientation program is structured in a way that students wouldn't choose LSSU.”

Students often have very vibrant and detailed feedback about their Orientation experience. Could you please share any recent feedback about the current Orientation model that Lake Superior State University has?

“Last night when I was doing the Safe Ride program, many students actually talked about how they didn't enjoy orientation because it was too long and filled with lots of presentations from the different departments. I believe there's parts that could be improved, but it's also important to get the information in these presentations directly to students.”

Do you believe or have heard that the current Orientation model that Lake Superior State University employs induces hardships on students or Support Packs traveling from locations not in the local area, and what measures are in place to mitigate those hardships if there are any?

“I don't believe I've heard anything specific about out-of-state residents undergoing hardships due to traveling for orientation, but again this is also because our orientation is right before classes start and usually doesn't include family members. I'm sorry again for the delay in my response. I hope these answers provide some productive feedback, but it seems that we might have a different orientation model.”

Central Michigan University

Central Michigan University conducted a virtual interview over Zoom with one of our committee members. This time, we asked them the following questions. As this interview was not recorded, we cannot provide verbatim responses, but we can provide the notes taken by our committee member.

What is your current Orientation program?

- *Summer Orientation slots*
 - *Sign up slots from May to August*
 - *Academic and building tours*
 - *There are virtual options available with a larger audience*
 - *Breaks down closely to 1-1 interactions over time*
- *Fall Engagement programming*



- Meant to “fire up” students
- Not required for anyone
- Has the benefit of moving in early

How involved are students in the Orientation planning, Orientation execution, and Orientation review (e.g. collecting feedback, performing reflections, and making future-year decisions) at Central Michigan University?

- *Students can become Orientation Mentors (similar to MTU’s OTLs)*
 - *Hired in April and has Orientation “teams” for a longer period of time*
 - *Student is meant to be a single point of contact*
 - *Interviewee has experienced students interacting with her post-October*
- *Students can also become the equivalent of Orientation Executive Staff at CMU called Orientation Leaders*
 - *Mainly plans the Fall Engagement programming*
- *Orientation Mentors do not have a direct hand in collecting feedback or planning Orientation*
 - *The Orientation Leaders do have a hand in collecting previous feedback about the Fall Engagement programming*

It has been cited that there is a phenomenon of “Orientation Shopping” occurring amongst new college students, where students attend multiple Orientation programs and determine their enrollment based on the quality of their experience. Is this a phenomenon that CMU recognizes as an issue?” As a follow-up, if CMU observes this phenomenon, do you believe the Orientation program is structured in a way to introduce the university under the pretense that students might not choose to attend the university?

- *Interviewee had no influence over the Orientation program (other than being an Orientation Mentor)*
- *Interviewee had students say that they decided they were going to go to Central after going through the summer portion*
 - *Orientation Mentors are involved also during the summer*
 - *They go through a rigorous training before the summer sessions start*

Students often have very vibrant and detailed feedback about their Orientation experience. Could you please share any recent feedback about the current Orientation model that Central Michigan University has?

- *Positive feedback on the summer portion of Orientation*
 - *Students feel that they are involved and more comfortable with campus*
 - *There are students who cannot make it due to distance / timing*



- *Virtual option has many improvements that need to be made*
 - *Virtual options are not engaging whatsoever*
- *Positive feedback on the Fall Engagement programming segment*

Wayne State University

We requested data from a Wayne State University study on Orientation Staff payment structures for midwestern universities. We ended up not using this data in the final report, as it was not relevant to our analysis. We also inquired about “Orientation shopping” at Wayne State university. Their response was:

“In regard to "orientation shopping", this is the first time of me hearing[sic] about this phenomenon, so I am not sure if I can give you an accurate answer. Typically, the students who attend our orientation have already decided to select Wayne State University. Our orientation model is constructed on the idea that these students will be attending Wayne State University and are looking to receive more information about our university. So, I would say no, I do not think we construct our orientation under the pretense that students might choose another university over Wayne State.”

Oakland University

We reached out to Oakland University separately with the same questions as the other universities, but we actually received a request for a meeting from a Student Congress representative on an unrelated subject. During this meeting, we asked about methods to work together with various departments to create change at our university, and we got some feedback. As this interview was not recorded, we cannot provide verbatim responses, but we can provide the notes taken by our committee member who met with this representative. *Please note that this meeting or the questions asked was not in the context of Orientation, but the act of inspiring change of a different aspect of the university. When we refer to “this change”, we are referring to the conversation that was had with the Oakland University representative.*

How has the Student Congress at Oakland University walked through the change implemented, and how do you recommend that Michigan Tech’s Undergraduate Student Government proceed?

- *Dual effort between student government action and external university influence*
 - *Student government should aim to pass a resolution to encourage the administration to start looking towards the change*
 - *Student government should gauge Student Assembly on change to gain opinion*
 - *Student governments should work together to equally push forward this change at once*



- *For this change, the first step would be to reach out to Registrar's about this change, and then move up the ladder*
- *External university influence can include other universities or bodies, such as The Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU)*
 - *For this change, going through MASU is step 1*

How does Oakland University anticipate dealing with pushback of this change, if you do think there will be any?

- *There very well could be pushback, it's a change to the current policy and structure*
 - *Student governments should wait until coalition creates action that influences universities externally*
- *Collection of data and feedback is crucial to make the next steps easier*
 - *If students are on board, it could be easier to implement*