Auburn University at Montgomery

University Success and Orientation

Certified Public Manager® Training Program
2012 CPM Solutions Alabama
TEAM MEMBERS

Christina Chapman
Alabama Department of Revenue

Christie Davis
Alabama Department of Revenue

Angie Head
Alabama Department of Finance/ Motor Pool

Laura Matthews
Alabama Department of Industrial Relations

Roxanne Moore
Alabama Department of Revenue

Scott Ramsey
Alabama Department of Environmental Management

Nitin Rastogi
Alabama Department of Human Resources

Amanda Wolfe
Alabama Department of Revenue
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Shirley Harrington
Senior Data Analyst, AUM Admissions and Recruitment

Lakecia Harris
Director, AUM Student Affairs

Dr. Lisa Kerr
First Year Experience Manager, AUM Advising and Academic Enhancement

Dr. Janice Lyn
Dean of Students, AUM Student Affairs

Leslie Meadows
Assistant Director, Alabama Training Institute

Tyler Peterson
Dean of Enrollment Management, AUM Admissions and Recruitment
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INTRODUCTION

The Auburn University at Montgomery Certified Public Management Team (the Team) researched best practices, trends, current Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) procedures, and other universities’ information and data related to orientation programs, university success classes and student success centers to arrive at recommendations that can be implemented to help increase enrollment and retention. The objectives of the project include:

1. Explore best practices and recommend improvements for university orientation.

2. Research trends, curriculums, and requirements related to a university success/orientation class and make recommendations on a model for AUM.

3. Examine student success center models and make recommendations on a model for AUM.

BACKGROUND

According to the University website, AUM is a land grant institution located on a 500-acre campus seven miles east of downtown Montgomery, Alabama. It was established in 1967, and classes began in 1969. Auburn Montgomery has been chosen by The Princeton Review as a "Best Southeastern College", and the AUM School of Business has been selected repeatedly as a "Best Business School." It is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the bachelor's, master's and specialist degrees as well as the joint and cooperative doctoral degrees with Auburn University. Auburn Montgomery is organized into five schools: Business, Education, Liberal Arts, Nursing and Sciences. Undergraduate degrees include the Bachelor of Arts in communication and dramatic arts, english, fine arts, history and international studies; and Bachelor of Science in business administration, education, justice and public safety, mathematics, physical science, political science and psychology. The University offers graduate degrees in all five schools and an Education Specialist degree. A Ph.D. in public administration and public policy is offered jointly with Auburn University.

Auburn Montgomery’s mission is to foster and exemplify excellence in education through instruction, research and service. As a center of learning dedicated to the examination of ideas and values influencing civilizations, AUM is committed to:

1. Providing students with an understanding of the issues, ideas and values that have a significant impact on the development of society;

2. Developing in its students the methodological approaches essential to understanding contemporary society and its problems and to fostering critical thinking;
3. Providing students with a broadly based education, as well as preparing them for the learned professions;

4. Conducting research that contributes to the advancement of knowledge;

5. Extending its knowledge, skills and resources to the community, state and region;

6. Providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

Auburn Montgomery encourages open and free inquiry and seeks to instill in its students ways of thinking, communicating and learning that will be of enduring value. AUM is committed to the following values:

- Excellence
- Accountability
- Accessibility
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Creativity
- Responsibility
- Honesty
- Fairness

The personal and intellectual development of students is the inherent goal of a university education. This assumption, complemented by the belief that knowledge is valuable in itself, underlies the primary aspiration of AUM: to create in students a realization of their potential as responsible, ethical human beings. Auburn Montgomery adopts the following goals:

1. Enhance academic programs.

2. Increase student success and retention.

3. Enhance AUM’s engagement with Auburn University.

4. Increase AUM’s partnerships with business, government and the community external to AUM.

5. Attract, recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff of highly qualified individuals.

6. Identify and obtain the financial resources needed to support the university’s mission.

7. Maintain a physical facilities infrastructure, including buildings and information technology that enhances academic programs, business operations and student life.
OBSERVATIONS

General

Auburn Montgomery already has an orientation program, a counseling center, a career development center, a learning center/instructional support lab and a template for a university success class. The Team set tasks related to improving upon what was already in place and to researching and recommending models of a student success center. The university has also already begun to address the challenges of retention and enrollment through student surveys, data and statistical analysis, university management changes, orientation program changes, the new construction of a wellness center and a housing facility and contacting the Alabama Training Institute to request a team to research the areas of orientation, success centers and success classes.

Statistics

Statistics show that AUM’s retention rate of all full-time, first-time bachelor’s (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduate students has decreased from 57.7% in 2009 to 54.3% in 2010. ACT Inc., an independent, not-for-profit organization, reported that the national first to second year retention rate for a public university offering a bachelor’s degree was 68% in 2008, 68% in 2009 and 68% in 2010. Per data collected through CollegeMeasures.org, a partnership between the American Institutes for Research and Matrix Knowledge Group, retention rates of AUM for years 2004 – 2010 are compared to other local universities in the graph below. ACT Public and ACT Private represent the median retention rate averages for public institutions and private institutions. Auburn Montgomery, Alabama State University (ASU) and Troy University (Troy) are public institutions. Faulkner University (Faulkner) and Huntingdon College (Huntingdon) are private institutions. As the data suggests, all local universities have had fluctuations in retention. Auburn Montgomery currently ranks five out of five local universities as it relates to the ability to retain students with one being the best retention rate and five being the worst.
Orientation

Most university orientation programs consist of a one or two day time period where incoming students (and other allowed participants) learn about the university, register for classes and become more familiar with campus and other students. These programs involve fees, orientation leaders, activities, food, tours, student organization fairs and various handouts (like books, pamphlets, etc.). Some programs allow for some or all student participants to spend a night on campus in a dormitory. Some universities have staff, resources and web pages dedicated to orientation year-round. The research conducted by our Team revealed that some universities seek out sponsors for their orientation program. These sponsors make a donation directly to the orientation program, and in return, the sponsors have their name included on the back of an orientation t-shirt or items with their name on it put into an orientation welcome packet.

Usually, the orientation leader positions have requirements that must be met, as well as an application process and an interview process. Orientation leaders are held to a code of conduct and a dress code as determined by the university. Often, orientation leaders are not just active for orientation. Universities can choose to treat orientation leaders like school ambassadors, where the leaders must participate in other university functions (such as pre-semester events, freshmen events, move-in day). Orientation leaders may also receive course credit (two or three credit class that encompasses orientation leader duties as well as leadership training) and/or compensation, scholarship, and/or housing for their role in the orientation program.

The orientation leader class is a less well known option for orientation programs. The courses usually include topics related to leadership development and orientation
preparation. Some courses even include an overnight retreat. The goal of these types of courses is to prepare orientation leaders to be the best leaders they can be and to create a team culture.

There are many variations on the structure of an orientation program, and that structure is often a reflection of the size of the campus, the housing, the student body and the monetary resources. The ultimate goals of an orientation program are to familiarize the student (and other stakeholders such as parents/guardians) with the university, provide guidance and make the transition to college easier.

The AUM orientation program is named “AUM: Incredible Experience.” The purpose of orientation is to give students a head start toward becoming successful and productive members of the Auburn Montgomery family. The fee for attending this one-day event is $75. A guest may also attend with the student for a fee of $15. All freshmen and transfer students are required to attend. Currently, summer/spring orientation (for students starting school in the summer or spring) is a shortened version of the fall orientation (for students starting school in the fall). The summer/spring and fall both include orientation leaders (called COGS – College Orientation Gurus), an informational session, an optional tour of housing and parts of campus, getting a student identification card and registering for classes. Fall orientation also includes a student organization fair and COGS skits. Since the fall orientation is usually larger than summer/spring, there is often an event of some type that occurs two to four hours after orientation is complete, such as a concert. During most of the fall orientation session, parents and students attend different tracks. Additionally, the orientation uses AUM non-teaching staff as speakers during parts of the orientation. An optional survey is also presented to participants before they register for classes. All participants receive an AUM: Incredible Experience New Student and Family Guide. The guide is a 5.5” x 8.5” sized pamphlet on glossy paper that is eleven pages long and includes a welcome address from the Dean of Students, the history of AUM, an academic calendar and brief information about advising, campus police, the Career Development Center, the cashier office, the Center for Disability Services, the Counseling Center, dining services, diversity and multicultural affairs, financial aid, student direct deposit, the help desk, honors program, housing and residence life, intramurals, the Learning Center, the library, Student Health Clinic, Registrar’s Office, student records, student affairs and student involvement and leadership programs.

College Orientation Gurus help plan and execute the orientation experience for all participants. There are a minimum two days of training that occur prior to orientation and approximately six mandatory orientation dates that COGS must attend. Per the AUM website, COGS applicants must meet the following qualifications:

1. Must be enrolled as a student at AUM for the spring and fall semesters (Seniors graduating in May or August are eligible for consideration)

2. Must have attended AUM for at least 2 full semesters prior to term of employment or have completed 24 credit hours at AUM
3. Must have at least a 2.25 cumulative GPA and must be in good academic standing with AUM
4. Must be available to attend all training and orientation sessions
5. Must be comfortable leading group discussions
6. Must possess strong interpersonal/communication skills
7. Must have a good sense of humor, balanced by a sense of responsibility
8. Desire to achieve excellence

College Orientation Guru responsibilities include:

1. Serve as a leader and active participant during orientation sessions
2. Lead small group discussions involving 10-15 students per session
3. Learn and teach AUM traditions and student services information
4. Attend and participate in all training sessions
5. Help prepare orientation packets prior to each session
6. Attend preparation sessions prior to each orientation and debriefing sessions following each orientation session
7. Serve as a role model for all students
8. Serve as student representative to parents, as you may also work with the parent/guest program
9. Prepare for weekly meetings
10. Recruit the next year's Orientation Leaders
11. Other duties as assigned

All interested, qualified students must timely complete and submit a COGS application. Auburn Montgomery interviews qualified applicants and typically selects 25 students to be COGS.
University Success Class

Every university wants students to succeed. Success starts with incoming students. A university success class is usually a one to three credit course taught by multiple professors aimed at making the transition to college easier. Classes often involve topics such as university life, university traditions, time management, goal setting, communication, study skills, critical thinking, effective writing and speaking, presentation skills, exam and test taking strategies, community service and team building.

Our Team researched universities across the country to determine whether having a required incoming student course positively affected retention rates. The results were unanimous: a course for incoming students to help with the transition to the school did aid in retention. University College at the University of Arizona (UCUA) recorded a retention rate of 78% for students that passed the course compared to only 50% retention for students that failed the course and 22% retention for students that withdrew from the course. University College at the University of Arizona even discovered a link between academic success in the course and the continued academic success of the student for their entire college career. During their study, UCUA found that students that passed the course had an average cumulative GPA of 3.00 as juniors and sophomores whereas students that failed the course had an average cumulative GPA of 2.57 and students that withdrew had an average cumulative GPA of 2.19.

The Team decided to focus on the content of university success classes at four local, four-year institutions: Alabama State University, Troy University, Faulkner University and Huntingdon College.

Alabama State University – ORI100: Freshman Orientation. According to the ASU website, this is a one credit course that is required of all undergraduate students. It is designed to provide an orientation to the purpose of higher education in general and to Alabama State University in particular. It is designed to help new students adjust to university life, develop positive attitudes toward the learning process and begin the college experience with a clear sense of direction, increased self-confidence and a basic knowledge of the personal and academic skills necessary for success. Honors sections of this course are available for students enrolled in the Honors Program.

Troy University – TROY1101: University Orientation. According to the Troy website, this is a one credit course that is required of all undergraduate students. The course is designed to assist entering students in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the university environment effectively, thus maximizing student potential for success at the university and in life.

Faulkner University – FAFE1111: The Freshman Experience and FATE2111: The Transfer Experience. According to the Faulkner website, FAFE 1111 is required of all new students or students with less than 13 hours of transfer credit. It focuses on the orientation of new students to the university and university life. The class is designed to provide new students with academic and life skills necessary for college success.
Course objectives include sessions on campus resources, study skills, time management, personal relationships, money management, health and wellness and academic advising. FATE2111 is required of all new students with more than 12 hours of transfer credit. It focuses on providing transfer students with the skills necessary to make a smooth transition from their previous college/university to Faulkner. The class is designed to help transfer students explore factors influencing the transition to Faulkner and develop skills to enhance academic success. Students are also introduced to Faulkner policies and procedures, campus facilities and resources and expectations and challenges.

Huntingdon College – PACT103: Practicing the Art of Critical Thinking. According to the Huntingdon website, this is a three credit course that is required for all students during the first semester of enrollment for each student admitted as a new freshman or transfer student (although transfer students with 57 or more transfer credits may petition to have the class requirement waived). The course is designed to introduce critical thinking at the college level and develop each student as an active critical thinker. The class centers around critical thinking but also includes topics on attending college, and creating citations and works cited pages for papers.

Auburn Montgomery has created a course for university success called EDUC 1220: Student Success and Strategies. Per the syllabus, the learning vision statement for this course states that it is “designed as a learning-centered course committed to supporting students through a transformative education process that requires active engagement, critical thinking, open-minded inquiry and a commitment of time among students and faculty alike.” The course encompasses the following components:

1. **Development of Society:** Provides students with opportunities to investigate issues, ideas and the values associated with education and the impact that education has on their contribution to their communities and society.

2. **Fosters Critical Thinking:** Guides students through processes that are grounded in theory that serve to encourage the development of skills associated with problem solving, goal setting and time management.

3. **Broadly Based Education:** Concepts discussed and skills practiced within this course contribute the students’ ability to relate with others in society as well as enhance their potential engagement in the learned professions.

4. **Research for Knowledge and Advancement:** Students will participate in the development processes through which they will research the patterns associated with academic and professional success.

5. **Opportunity for Lifelong Learning:** Skills and knowledge acquired and practiced within this course will be applicable to the students’ continued educational and professional learning.
The goal of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to better understand the skills and time required to succeed at AUM. Additionally, class activities are completed individually and within groups, encouraging students to practice skills needed to collaboratively contribute to a meaningful product within a group setting. Through this course students will:

- Gain knowledge of campus policies, services and resources.
- Develop the skills that will support academic achievement including yet not limited to gain understanding of, and practice, goal setting and time management.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate well both verbally and in writing.
- Understand the importance of healthy mental and physical lifestyles.
- Understand student rights and responsibilities with the AUM community.
- Understand the importance of diversity on campus.
- Gain an awareness of support services that are available on campus and connect with them.
- Develop an academic and career plan.
- Become familiar with Blackboard on-line course components.
- Meet numerous people from AUM’s community dedicated to supporting student success.

Students are required to read *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success* and are subject to reading quizzes at the professor’s discretion depending on class participation. The course also includes a group project where each team will be responsible for designing a unique activity that provides the rest of the class with an opportunity to practice one of the success skills discussed. Journaling and writing assignments are also required to encourage students to reflect upon their own AUM journey to academic success, their concerns and achievements. Students begin the course with 1,000 points or an “A”. It is the student’s responsibility to maintain the “A” by attending and participating in class which includes contributing to class conversation, asking questions regarding course material, paying attention to other classmates and contributing to the group project.

Currently, this course is required for provisional and seamless admission students. Provisional admission is for first-time freshman students that don’t meet all the requirements for admission to AUM but can answer yes to one of the following:

- Do you have an ACT composite score of 18 or more (SAT score of 860) but your scores combined with your GPA do not meet the minimum?
- Did you graduate from high school more than three years ago with a GPA of less than 2.0?
- Did you complete a GED but lack the ACT scores required for regular admission?

Seamless Admission is a joint program of Auburn University (AU) and AUM and was created to provide an alternative admission route for those students who wish to attend
Auburn University. Seamless is a competitive academic-enhancement program available to students who have applied to Auburn and had their admission deferred. Seamless students are officially AUM students, but most students take their classes on the AU campus and get to take part in many AU activities. If the student meets academic expectations, they will be guaranteed admission as an AU student beginning their sophomore year.

Success Center

Student Success Centers usually consist of several different services, offered in a centralized location, that assist students as they transition from high school and as they progress toward graduation. Services offered include but are not limited to:

1. Academics – An Academic Assistance Center provides students with free tutoring and/or writing assistance. More recently, universities are offering courses that count towards college credits that fall under the Academics area of a Success Center. These courses include topics related to study skills, career exploration and critical thinking. Universities are also creating early alert systems to help monitor class attendance and grades, whereby professors can notate in their system when a student is in danger of missing too many days of class and/or failing a class, the student's advisor is contacted and the advisor sets up a meeting with the student.

2. Learning Center - A Learning Center helps students accomplish their academic goals by identifying the appropriate courses for the student's major and informing students of campus resources available to them. These centers often have information online, as well as on campus.

3. Career Center - A Career Center helps students become more knowledgeable about career choices. This center aids students in finding internships or volunteer opportunities and provides tips to succeed in interviews. These centers often have information online, as well as on campus.

The 2011 Student Retention Practices Benchmark Report by Noel-Levitz reported that academic support programs were number two out of the top ten best practices for retention. Additionally, a Noel-Levitz student survey from a national sample of more than 90,000 college freshmen indicated that the top five tools to succeed are instruction in taking exams (75%), help with study habits (58%), help with math skills (48%), tutoring (44%) and help with reading skills (29%). The University of Missouri-Columbia found that 87% of users from their learning center were retained. Many other universities with retention rates of 70% or above also utilized student success centers.

Locally, Troy has a Student Success Center that serves as a central location for all student success needs, and Faulkner has a Student Success Office that serves as a central point of contact for student services. While Faulkner provides a central contact for services located throughout campus, Troy’s Success Center takes centralization a
step further by providing a “one-stop-shop” for student services. Troy’s Success Center is in charge of the university success classes, student development (test administration, withdrawals, counseling, career services), student learning initiatives (reading initiatives, learning communities), student support centers (labs and tutors), testing and assessment (preparing for GRE or the GMAT, personality assessments) and wellness (fitness classes, wellness week).

In addition to being in charge of the university success class, the Faulkner University Student Success Office is also in charge of another course aimed at helping students progress from pre-college, through college, and onto careers (FACE1300: The College Edge: Success in Academics). The course is an elective worth three credits and is not mandatory for every student (but it may be deemed mandatory in certain cases). Alabama State University offers a similar class (ORI130: College Study Skills) that is worth three credits. The course description states that it is a laboratory course to improve study skills, with emphasis on motivation and goal orientation, scheduling, listening, note taking, outlining, test taking, reading, critical thinking and analysis. The course is an elective, but it may be deemed a mandatory class for some students (like those completing academic suspension and students placed on probation). While these two examples represent course offerings locally, our research of other universities’ websites indicates there is a trend of offering these types of classes through the Student Success Centers (or offices) of universities across the country.

Auburn Montgomery provides numerous student services that are located in different offices and different areas of campus. Currently, AUM provides the following student services:

1. Advising - AUM requires students to see an adviser before registering for class. If the student has declared a major, the advisor will be from that particular school (i.e. School of Business, School of Liberal Arts, etc.). If not, the student must work with the Office of Advising and Academic Enhancement.

2. Career Development – The Career Development Center provides tools and techniques to help students build a successful career. These tools and techniques include identifying student aptitudes, setting career goals, creating job-search strategies and resume assistance.

3. Counseling – The Counseling Center provides AUM students (that are enrolled in a degree granting program) with free, confidential counseling services. These services include individual counseling, education programming and training, consultation and referral services and crisis intervention. Counselors are trained, licensed and credentialed professionals. The counseling process can be initiated by the student or through referral by a teacher, family member, friend or professional in the community.
4. Disability Services - The Center for Disability Services assists students with disabilities by providing services such as test proctoring, interpreting, captioning, note taking, assistive technology, e-text, Braille and other accommodations.

5. Health Services – The Student Health Clinic offers a full range of health services, including a voluntary health insurance program, health screenings, physical examinations, immunizations, women’s health examinations, contraceptive counseling and laboratory testing.

6. Instructional Support - The Learning Center/Instructional Support Lab provides free tutoring for students enrolled in biology, chemistry, math, physics and general sciences. Available resources include internet-accessible computers, Microsoft Office programs, interactive computer tutorials, multimedia programs, video-based tutorials, study notes, sample tests, mini-workshops (topics like avoiding plagiarism and studying for exams), English as a Second Language courses and practice tests.

7. Student Records - The Registrar’s Office provides a wide range of services including student information corrections, degree verifications, diploma replacements, enrollment verifications, evaluations for degree completion, Faulkner/Huntingdon consortium student registration, FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) compliance, good standing verifications, grade changes, graduation, international transfer articulation, military information requests, registration assistance, transcripts, senior guest program, student withdrawals, transfer credit articulation and residency authorizations.

The map below shows the six main buildings on campus that currently house student services.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Orientation

Several recommendations have been formulated to enhance the orientation program. These recommendations have been separated into two sections: program content and program structure.

Program Content:

All orientation sessions should have the same content so that all students, regardless of when they start classes, will have the same engaging experience.

1. **Theme.** The summer/spring and fall orientations utilized the theme "AUM: Incredible Experience". The Team observed that this theme was not consistently applied throughout the various orientations. The Team agrees that the buzz phrase repeated in all orientations was "Dream It, Live It, Own It." It is a powerful statement that is already being used within the AUM community for advertising purposes. It coincides with the "Own It" pep-talk during orientation. The Team recommends that this phrase be used as the orientation theme. It can be repeated on advertising, shirts, promotional items, etc.

2. **Events.** Auburn Montgomery often hosts events around the same dates as fall orientation. Team members noted that there was no mention of the AUM hosted
Summer Concert Series during fall orientation, even though the event was taking place the same day as the orientation being attended. Orientation is an opportunity to advertise the events and activities available at AUM, and the Team recommends that upcoming events be advertised using the COGS and printed materials (for example, flyers at orientation locations). Advertising can encompass not only events on the day of orientation but also events within the weeks surrounding orientation. This has the ability to enhance student participation in campus life.

3. Activities. Ice breaker activities were led by the COGS and orientation faculty during the orientation sessions. These activities were entertaining but did not involve students interacting with one another on a large scale. The Team recommends including ice breaker activities that require students interacting with other students, orientation program facilitators and COGS (see Appendix 1). It is also suggested that these ice breakers be utilized in the fall orientation as well. Additionally, Team members who attended summer orientation observed a much smaller student organization presence than that of fall orientation. Auburn Montgomery is home to approximately 60 student organizations. These organizations should be required to participate in orientation if they wish to continue to remain active organizations on campus. In the event the organizations cannot attend, they should notify the Orientation director and attempt to provide information about their organization (that can be displayed at a table during the student organization fair). During the activity where students and other attendees are broken into groups for question and answer sessions, the Team recommends these sessions keep parents (and other non-students) separated from students with the students being given the most COGS to create smaller groups and more interaction (for example, one COG or orientation facilitator per every ten students).

4. Materials. The AUM: Incredible Experience New Student and Family Guide is a publication that is handed out at all orientation sessions. The Team recommends a few changes to this publication that will enhance its effectiveness. The first recommendation relates to the size and paper type of the Guide. The Team recommends using non-glossy paper (so that pen marks will not smudge regardless of the type of pen used and so that pencils can be used). Additionally, the Guide should be expanded to an 8 ½ x 11 size paper and include pictures of actual students, teachers, advisors, etc. The current “Dr. Janice Lyn Welcome Letter” should be revised to include a picture of Dr. Lyn and AUM letterhead. The Team recommends a "cheat sheet" for phone numbers (as a quick reference guide) and the inclusion of a campus map, AUM mission statement, AUM vision statement, a page dedicated to Curtiss (AUM’s mascot) and his history and a page of coupons for local businesses (which would require a partnership with those local businesses – see Advertising located under Program Structure).

Program Structure:

1. Leadership Development Class. The COGS play a vital role in the orientation; they serve as the entertainment, the leaders, host/hostesses, traffic directors, and
eventually friends to their fellow students. We recommend that an orientation leader class (for course credit) be implemented. Currently, the COGS meet in the months prior to orientation, but the Team believes that an orientation leader class would prove to be a more productive and effective way to give COGS the necessary training and a sense of ownership, knowledge and pride as it relates to AUM and orientation. The class should be one to three course credits and be aimed at facilitating cohesiveness between the orientation program participants and creating a more dynamic orientation skit presentation. Please see Appendix 2 for additional information on course content.

2. **AUM website information.** The Team recommends that the AUM website provide more detailed information about the COGS. While the website currently provides information on COG qualifications and the application process, it does not provide information regarding the students selected to be COGS (picture, name, major, email address, graduation date, fun fact, plans for the future, best part of being a COG, etc.). Dedicating a web page to orientation and to the COGS gives orientation attendees a central location to research what orientation is about and who their orientation leaders will be. It also facilitates open communication among COGS (who are leaders in the AUM community) and orientation attendees.

3. **Orientation length and price of attendance.** Currently, the price of attending orientation is at or below the cost of other comparable universities. The Team recommends that the admission price be increased, and the orientation be expanded to a two-day program (either for all participants or a selected portion of participants). The price increase should be an amount that is commensurate with the additional cost of a two day orientation and/or the cost of a leadership development class for COGS. The Team also recommends that the AUM dormitories be opened to students interested in spending the night on campus during the two day orientation (this could be optional for all student orientation participants or a selected portion of participants with an additional amount due to stay on campus), and/or AUM partner with local hotel(s) to provide orientation participants with the option to stay at a hotel at a discounted rate.

4. **Location and set up.** During the fall orientation, the gym was an ideal location; however, the Team recommends utilizing the space differently. Currently, attendees sit in the upper and lower sections of the gym seating. There is a stage and a video screen. A larger stage is recommended because it will give the COGS more room to perform and engage the audience. The current sound system does not provide quality sound in the upper seat section of the gym. The Team recommends locating parents and other non-student orientation attendees to one side of the gym and locating the student attendees on the other side of the gym, both in the lower section of the gym (instead of the upper section). This structure would allow the separation of students/parents to take place while allowing everyone to hear better. The Team also suggests a larger screen so that any videos and information displayed can be clearly seen from any seat within the gym.
5. **Advertising.** A cost-saving suggestion is to obtain sponsors to help off-set costs of orientation. The sponsoring businesses could be thanked at the beginning of the summer/spring and fall orientations and be included in *AUM: New Student and Family Guide* (this could be done using coupons or ads at the end of the book) and/or orientation welcome packets (for example – a “goodie” bag with the Guide, AUM paraphernalia and sponsoring businesses’ paraphernalia).

**University Success Class**

Our Team research indicates that most university success classes are one to three credit hours and contain the following elements: social skills, critical thinking and learning skills. Most classes are also on a grading scale of “A” to “F” (instead of just pass/fail) and are required by at least one student type (whether that be a new freshman, a student on probation, etc.). The classes typically include activities such as writing assignments, journals, class projects and attending campus events and offices.

Auburn Montgomery has recently revamped EDUC 1220: Student Success and Strategies course which has made it comparable to similar courses offered by other universities, including local universities that we researched. However, unlike other universities AUM does not require that every incoming freshman take the course. We believe that the current course will definitely make a positive impact on the success of the students who take this course, both during their pursuit for higher education and later when they become productive members of society. As every single freshman could reap lifetime benefits from this course, we recommend that this course be a required course for all freshmen and not be limited to the provisional and seamless admission students. Moreover, we recommend that AUM require all transfer students to take this course but offer a provision that transfer students with a certain amount of transfer hours be allowed to petition that the class requirement be waived.

The Student Success and Strategies course focuses on critical thinking and guiding the students to take an active part in their college education, which we agree is very important. We applaud the use of a group project in the course to initiate team building. However, we see a need for more avenues for team building so that the incoming freshmen class can build a strong social network which they can lean upon for support and guidance during their college years. Therefore, we recommend that this course require students to participate in university traditions and campus events, such as sporting events, theater productions, or themed events. This will not only help the students to build relationships with their peers but it will also help them establish a connection or bond with AUM. It will help the students to be successful and in turn help increase the retention rate.

**Success Center**

The Team proposes that AUM establish a Student Success Center. While AUM offers services similar to those offered in a Student Success Center, these services are
located in various areas of campus, such as the Taylor Center, Goodwyn Hall, Clement Hall and the Library. The Team recommends moving the following student services to one central location on main campus: Advising and Academic Enhancement, Career Development, Counseling, Student Records, Disability Services, Instructional Support, and Learning Center. As previously stated, research has shown that schools that utilize a student success center tend to have higher retention rates.

The Student Success Center not only centralizes student services for convenience purposes but also facilitates a closer relationship between various campus Departments, faculty/staff and students. Faculty involvement is critical to the success of the Student Success Center. Faculty can work with the Student Success Center to set up an early alert system to monitor class attendance and grades. If a student has poor attendance, failing grades or any other academic difficulties, the faculty member would refer him or her to the Student Success Center.

The Student Success Center would also house the University Success Class. Locating this class in the Student Success Center would be ideal because the University Success Class utilizes many services that would be a part of the Student Success Center. There is a trend of offering elective classes aimed at helping students succeed in college. The Team recommends that in addition to the University Success class, AUM offer other courses, such as those offered by Faulkner University and Alabama State University, to help students succeed. These courses would be electives, but, may be deemed a mandatory class for some students (those coming off academic suspension or those placed on probation). Examples of class topics include study skills, goal orientation, scheduling, listening, note taking and test taking.

The Student Success Center will not only help student professionally but also in their personal lives. Auburn Montgomery has recently brought an awareness of the importance of student personal lives by establishing a Wellness Center. Though not a main component of the Student Success Center, the Wellness Center is a vital part of student’s well-being. Poor health choices can greatly affect student’s self-esteem and well-being which could affect their performance academically. The Team proposes that the Wellness Center collaborate with the Student Success Center to schedule fitness classes, fitness instructors, yoga on the quad, or similar activities.

A Student Success Center would be a vital link between students and the University. Auburn Montgomery and its students would benefit greatly from developing a centralized Student Success Center.
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Appendix 1 – Ice Breakers

Reception Line
- Divide students into two groups and have them stand facing each other
- Each student talks to the student across from them until signaled (can be a buzzer or an orientation leader instructing students to move)
- At the signal, the students at the end of one line move to the beginning of the same line he/she was in

72 Seconds of Fun
- Tell students they have 72 seconds to meet as many people as possible
- Instruct them to tell others their name, where they live, why they chose AUM, their major, etc.
- When time is up, students are quickly divided into groups. The students discuss whether they met people in their group

Birthdays
- Students are asked to quickly find others who are born in the same month as they were and form a group
- The facilitator then calls out the months and each group gives a big cheer. This allows the participants to discover if more than one group formed for the same month
- Groups then have one minute to develop a cheer for their month
- After the minute the facilitator calls out each month in order with the respective group jumping up to give its cheer and then sitting down again

Commonalities
- Divide into groups of approximately 10 people and give each group a pen/pencil and a piece of paper
- Have each group identify 15 things they as a group have in common. (Commonalities can’t be things all human beings have in common – like skin or hearts)
- Each group will then be called on by the facilitator to share with the other groups

The A to Z Race
- Materials Needed: One piece of paper and a pen/pencil for each group
- Break the group down into small groups of 5 to 10 people and have them sit in a circle on the floor. Give each group a piece of paper and a pen/pencil. Have them write down on the paper the entire alphabet in a vertical line from A to Z. The object of the race is to find as many objects as possible which begin with each individual letter, write the object down on the paper and then physically place that object in the center of the table. (For example a person wearing a necklace would write that item next to N and place it in the center of the circle.) Each group must read and show each item they have thrown in the center of the circle. The group with the most items before the 5-minute time is up is declared the champion.
- Facilitator’s Note: Average running time for this activity is approximately 10 minutes.
Human scavenger hunt
- Everyone is provided a list of items to “hunt”. For example, find someone who is left handed, plays a musical instrument, loves dogs, wears contacts, etc.
- Students are given a specific amount of time to find all items
- Students should write down the name and the item found. Once time is up, the student with the most found items wins (these items are verified by calling the name and the item off of the list)

Person Scavenger Hunt Bingo
- Instead of creating a Bingo board with numbers, create a Bingo board of things anybody could have done or might have in their possessions. Give each player a copy of the board and get them to go around asking the other players if they match any of the details on the squares. If a player does, they have to sign their name in that square (for example, you have 2 brothers). Whoever gets a “bingo” wins (“bingo” refers to a complete line of completed squares – could be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal).

Paper Bag Fashion Show
- Group size should be 4 to 5 people per group. Each group will need a paper bag filled with items (roll of toilet paper, construction paper, markers, scissors, miscellaneous props, a pen or pencil and an index card).
- The task is to create a garment on someone in the group using all the materials except the card and pen/pencil in 10 to 15 minutes. Then the group will write a description of the garment on the card which will be given to the fashion show commentator (a COG).
- Everyone but the models will become the audience. The commentator reads the descriptions as the fashions are modeled. This can be adapted to fit a topic, such as make a garment that a great leader might wear, and so forth.
Appendix 2 – Leadership Development Class

Sample Texts
- Orientation Training Manual

Sample Course Objectives

Example 1
- Students will learn how to recognize, utilize and refer to various officials, services and departments on the campus.
- Students will learn to become comfortable speaking in front of large groups.
- Students will learn how to lead discussions in small group situations.
- Students will learn how to manage assigned classroom tasks (reading, studying and presenting) and manage job-related projects and responsibilities.
- Students will discuss and address social issues prevalent on college campuses and society as a whole.
- Students will learn and develop leadership skills

Example 2
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become an effective Orientation Leader and contributor to the Orientation Team focusing on personal strengths, weaknesses and leadership styles.
- Develop a broad understanding of purposes and practices of higher education in the United States and how those concepts are embodied at the university.
- Develop a basic understanding regarding the mission and goals of Orientation programming and, specifically, how it’s carried out at the university.
- Develop a basic understanding of the demographics of today’s college student, focusing on AUM students.
- Develop an understanding of academic programs and requirements and to gain the skills necessary to advise entering students.
- Critically examine the role of the Orientation Leader in the University community and develop an awareness of the impact Orientation Leaders have on entering students.
- Introduce students to the resources and programs available on campus and to become informed about co-curricular opportunities at the University.
- Develop an understanding and appreciation for diversity of all students, faculty and staff.
- Develop a team of Orientation Leaders who are supportive of each other, understand the importance of teamwork and have mutual respect for each other.
- Develop a commitment to helping entering students and their families have a positive and welcoming Orientation experience.
Example 3
- To assist the student in a process of self-assessment, reflection, analysis and evaluation of experience as an orientation leader
- To provide training, support and resources to assist the student in their duties as an orientation leader
- To prepare the student to serve as a role model for incoming students

Sample Course Content

- College Expert Assignment: Each orientation leader will be assigned to an academic college on campus of which he/she is expected to become an “expert”. COGS will research what majors are included in that college, career opportunities, areas of specialization, what the college is known for, etc. The COG will become the central liaison between orientation and the college.

- A 4-5 page paper on the text for the class.

- Campus Quest: As COGS, it is essential to know the physical layout of the University and be familiar with various aspects of its history and surroundings. Within an assigned group, each COG will be responsible for visiting and documenting a variety of places around campus. COGS will present the information in an effort to showcase locations on campus that other groups did not have the opportunity to visit.

- Campus Research Project and Presentation: Each COG will be assigned to an area of campus in to find out as much information as possible that will benefit the orientation leaders in working with new students. Students will work together to research topics from an assigned Student Affairs/Services area and prepare a 15-minute presentation.

- Team building exercises and/or outings.

- Orientation practice (skits, presentations, etc.).

- Required campus event attendance and/or participation.