**Information for IRB/Human Subjects Approval**

**Title**: New Student Orientation Benchmarking Study

**Brief Description**: Studies show that orientation and orientation programs play a vital role in students’ adjustment to the university and are credited with encouraging academic and social success and increasing the likelihood of retention and graduation. Additionally, orientation has several stakeholders and utilizes a wide array of campus resources. As such, it is important to assess the impact of orientation and document outcomes. The proposed study will assess the impact of orientation from the student perspective, utilizing survey research. By participating in this project, XXX will have access to benchmarking data from peer institutions. Benchmarking data will allow orientation programs to better document and understand what we are doing well and identify areas of opportunity, in comparison with peer and national averages. The project is a joint venture between the participating institutions, NODA, and Campus Labs (a third party conduit to collect benchmarking data).

**Background**: The New Student Orientation Benchmarking Study has been administered annually since 2004. XXX is able to modify the instrument where appropriate and may also add institution-specific questions. The instrument was pilot tested with a sample of students to ensure that it was easy to understand, that the questions were relevant, and to gauge the time needed to complete the instrument. To date, over 70 diverse colleges and universities have participated, with many participating in multiple years or on an every other year cycle. Each year, the survey instrument is reviewed to ensure that it is capturing relevant and meaningful information for staff and administrators to utilize to inform decision-making and to enhance the student experience.

**Population**: Campuses have the option to survey the entire population of new first-year and transfer students or a stratified random sample of students. No minors will be invited to participate in this study.

**Subject Recruitment**: Students will be invited to participate in the study through an invitation sent to their email address (see Appendix A). The email will contain a link to the online survey. Student email addresses will be obtained through the XXX Office (Registrar, IT, Institutional Research?). Participation is voluntary and students may skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

Given that this is an online survey, researchers will have no contact with participants, other than through the email invitation to participate. The email invitation will include the names and contact information of the researchers, so that students have a person to contact with any questions or concerns.

**Methods/Procedures**: All data collection will occur via an online survey. The survey will be open for approximately three weeks. In addition to the initial email, students will be sent two reminders via email. Survey completion is estimated at no more than 10-15 minutes, although some students may require additional time to complete the survey.

Researchers will have access to the data in real-time as it is being collected through a secure, password-protected reporting site. Data encryption and other measures will ensure the security of the data (see below for full security details). All data will be compiled in aggregate and no individual respondents will be identified. Data will be available through the online reporting site for an indefinite amount of time unless the campus instructs NACA/Campus Labs to purge their data.

Once all participating campuses have completed data collection, benchmarking reports will be available through the same secure, password-protected reporting site. At no time will a campus name be linked to any data reported in the benchmarking report.

Data will be analyzed using quantitative methodologies. In almost all instances, only descriptive statistics will be reported, however, when appropriate more advanced quantitative data analysis may take place.

**Informed Consent**: Students will be asked to provide their consent through the email invitation to participate in the survey (Appendix A). If having the informed consent in the email only is not sufficient, a separate start page will be added as the first page of the online survey that allows respondents to check a box that they understand that they are providing their informed consent.

**Anonymity/Confidentiality**: No individual response to the survey will ever be identified in any report. Rather, all resulting data will be reported in the aggregate. To allow for reminder emails to be sent to only non-respondents, the survey is not anonymous. Each possible respondent is sent a unique link that is tied to their email address. However, all identifiable information will be visible only to the email server and is blocked from viewing by all others. The administration of the survey can be dictated by institutional requirements related to anonymity and confidentiality in that all reminders can be sent to the entire sample if the campus does not wish to have unique/identifiable links sent to each possible respondent.

**Risks/Benefits**: While survey research presents minimal risks, students may be uncomfortable answering some of the questions. Participation is voluntary. Students may opt to skip any questions that they do not wish to answer. If students do experience any discomfort, they will be encouraged in the email invitation to contact the researchers.

The survey provides a better understanding the characteristics, perceptions, and attitudes of college students and will result in direct benefits for students, such as enhanced programming efforts.

**Deception**: Deception will not be used in this study.

**Compensation**: Students will not be compensated for completing the survey. [If incentives are being used, insert information here]. Only students who complete the online survey will be eligible for the incentives.

**Data Security**: All data will be stored through Campus Labs servers and will only be accessible through a unique username and password. Campus Labs has implemented various security measures at the application, network, and physical level to ensure that data will not be compromised. At the application level, several security measures and coding standards are in place such as code to guard against common hacking techniques, rules related to strength of passwords, and staying up-to-date on all security and release updates. Protection at the network level includes features such as dual firewalls, SSL encryption and 24/7 monitoring. Campus Labs servers are housed within a Class A Data Center, compliant with TIA standards. The servers are always staffed, have three-tiered access points, and 24/7 camera surveillance.

**Appendix A - Invitation to participate in the New Student Orientation Benchmarking Project / Informed Consent**

Dear New Student:

As a new student at the XXX, your thoughts and opinions are important! Please take a few minutes to complete a short questionnaire. You will be asked questions about your experiences as a new student. Many of the questions will ask you to reflect upon your orientation to XXX and how useful the information has been during your first few weeks of the academic year. Your responses will help to shape future programs and initiatives for new students.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You may access the survey by clicking on the link below:

[Click here – Campus Labs will insert link upon final approval of the survey by the institution]

If you have any difficulty logging in, please e-mail info@studentvoice.com or call 716.652.9400.

Please be assured that your answers are confidential. No individual’s answers will ever be identified in any report. In addition, your participation is voluntary, though I hope you will respond. By clicking on the link, you are indicating your consent to participate in this project. Should you have any questions about the project or our interest in using the results, I encourage you to contact [insert name of institutional contact person and phone number].

[Add any information about an incentive for participation. Institutions may opt to offer a gift certificate or other incentive.][[1]](#footnote-1)

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

[Institutional representative]

1. Incentives may significantly increase response rates. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)