

**MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**CO-CURRICULAR MINI-PROGRAM REVIEW**

**OPENING DAY 2009**

*a Keynote of the New Student Orientation Experience*



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*Co-curricular Program Review*  
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**MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
*Co-curricular Program Review*  
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**Section I: Introduction**

The Middlesex Community College Opening Day Student Program for new students, held in the fall serves as an official “kick off” to the start of classes for new students. This Opening Day Student Program Review includes assessment of Opening Day within the context of the day’s contribution to Middlesex Community College’s overall orientation efforts. The 2009 Opening Day program for new students occurred on the morning of September 8, 2009.

**History and Evolution**

Prior to college reorganization in 2004 (aligning Student Affairs with Academic Affairs under the supervision of the VP for Academic and Student Affairs), Opening Day was viewed as a single event offered by the college to orient new students to campus. Over the past 5 years, the vision for orientation has expanded to include a series of activities organized to engage and assist students with their transition to college and most recently these activities have begun to merge to represent a seamless journey of experiences leading to one end – the fully oriented new student. Opening Day has become one component of a multi-faceted orientation program that when connected with the other pieces leads to stronger connection to the College and higher degrees of student success. Standing alone it also offers some unique opportunities that contribute to a student’s preparedness and sense of belonging, but it is best experienced as part of the whole.

The all encompassing formalized journey of Orientation at Middlesex Community College is comprised of the following activities (Appendix A).

- Placement Testing and Refresher workshops
- Getting Started Advising and Registration Sessions
- Special Population Programs
  - Advance to Go
  - Avance Latino
  - Asian Connections
  - International Student Orientation
  - Veterans
  - Adult students
- Online and Written Material
  - Finding your Way at Middlesex video
  - In-Step Guide for Students
  - New Student web site
- Opening Day
- Welcome & Orientation Activities Month

Under the leadership of the Associate Dean of Student Development, an Orientation Project group was formed in 2009 to review all college efforts to assist students with the transition to Middlesex and to coordinate these program initiatives. The group represents a broad range of campus stake holders involved in orientation efforts including Enrollment Services, Student Activities, Academic Advising, Academic Support, International Programs, Academic Divisions and Admissions (Appendix B). After an analysis of CAS standards and clarifying goals for New Student Orientation, the group reviewed how each of these programs contributed to addressing these goals. Several program opportunities emerged as a result of this analysis. One of these initiatives included a recommendation for structural changes to Opening Day.

Prior to 2004, Opening Day was delivered with varying agendas, but always with similar format and content. The program occurred simultaneously on both campuses and started with a large group welcome session including greetings from college leadership, a keynote address by either a faculty member or an external motivational speaker, and a welcome from an upper-class student. After the first session, new students then met in smaller groups with their faculty or staff academic advisor to review academic requirements and college resources.

In 2004 the opening session was shortened and the keynote address was eliminated. Instead, a video entitled “Putting Your Best Foot Forward” was featured introducing students to a variety of college resources and strategies for success. Similar to previous years, after this opening session students attended small group meetings with their Academic Advisors

Student Interest Sessions were added in 2005 after the advisor meetings for students interested in selected topics including study skills, involvement opportunities, college adjustment, career development, transferring and connecting through common interests. Although returning student volunteers had always been involved in Opening Day, a formalized student Orientation Leader process was developed and selected students received leadership training. For the next several years, adjustments to Opening Day were made and the materials distributed to students were enhanced. Content for the day was modified based on feedback and review of the previous year’s program but the program remained essentially the same.

Informal feedback and assessment over the years coupled with the College’s sanction to move forward with changes, the format for the day was revised significantly in 2009. While much of the content on first-year expectations was still a priority, it was recognized that new students would likely benefit from stronger cohorts with peer groups and faculty that matched their own major and career interests. Previously, advisors often complained that their group session was too small and therefore not conducive to bonding and group activities. It had also been said by many that advisors all had their own style and content changed from room to room; that new students were not all receiving the same quality experience. Until 2009, attendance and participant satisfaction was not tracked or evaluated formally. Anecdotes and faculty/staff experiences provided the motivation to make changes.

The revised program included the welcome session with greetings from college leadership and a returning student as it was determined that this opening greeting is key to the visual of the larger community (happening only once more in a student’s academic passage – at graduation). Small group meetings with advisors were eliminated and replaced with group meetings for each academic major. Each of these major meetings involved acquaintance activities for faculty, advisors and new students in that academic discipline. Students were introduced to specific opportunities unique to that academic major and interactive activities were developed and implemented. A newly created motivational slideshow for student involvement was shown along with a video introducing Academic Support services. Other college resources and the “Putting Your Best Foot Forward” video shown in previous years was posted on a new student orientation website. All new students were sent a link to the site and encouraged to view a broad range of topics covered on-line.

The details for the new program were abundant and careful planning was required. In a short time, approximately 50 faculty and staff were trained on the new method, multiple individual conversations with room leaders occurred, and formal Q&A sessions were orchestrated on each campus. Everyone who ran a room was personally trained and prepared in one of these formats. Written materials were sent to every advisor with all details. All supplies prepared for each room in advance and handed to a room leader on Opening Day.

The new structure presented major organizational challenges that were met with enthusiasm as many welcomed the proposed changes. The greatest obstacles were space, technology and the need for training larger numbers of staff and faculty. These were accomplished with minimal effect on budget. The Opening Day program has been level funded since 2001 and while the planning team has found creative ways to meet its goals in spite of this, price increases over this decade are making that increasingly difficult.

The budget has been supported in larger part from the Student Activity Fund (SAF) derived from a portion of the Student Services Fee of \$25 per semester for students matriculated in 6 credits or more. Annually, \$5500.00 has been reserved for Opening Day needs and activities (with an additional \$4500.00 for special orientation sessions, welcome month programming, etc.). In 2009, this included the following:

Inn and Conference Center Ballroom for Lowell Plenary	\$1200.00
Orientation Leader Salaries (12)	\$2500.00
Student Orientation Leader Training Food & Supplies	\$200.00
Student Orientation Leader & Volunteer T-shirts	\$225.00
Thank you gift for Volunteers	\$125.00
Food for Volunteers on Opening Day	\$350.00
Give-aways for new Students	\$350.00
Snacks for Students & Misc Supplies	\$150.00
Lunch for Community Service Participants	\$330.00

Additionally, other areas of the College have traditionally paid for the large tent for the Bedford Campus plenary (used also that day for the College-wide Opening Ceremonies) and 3 mailings inviting new students to attend. In 2009, the Office of Publications purchased key chains for each new student participant.

### ***Assessment Process***

MCC Orientation and Opening Day have never been the subjects of a formal program review. There have been multiple surveys and comparisons to peer institutions in Massachusetts, but this is the first time MCC's own students and employees participated in an official evaluation process.

For the first time, every new student participant in the 2009 Opening Day program was asked to complete a sign in form (Appendix C). They were then flagged in Banner as having attended. Of those who attended 400 were sent an electronic evaluation (Appendix D) and 36% completed it. All faculty were similarly asked to complete an evaluation (Appendix E). 67 were collected for a 39% response rate. The results are detailed within this document.

Additionally, informal feedback was collected and documented. The Orientation committee also met Mid September 2009 and reviewed the success of the new format.

This Program Review also reports on results of significant benchmarking, data collection and the writing team's self appraisal. The Writing Team consists of the Associate Dean of Student Development, the Director of Leadership Development and Student Activities, and the Engagement Specialist. These 3 people were the key contributors to the Program Review due to the direct nature of their job descriptions and connection to the

program. This team met monthly throughout the academic year to share updates on their individual progress on various components of the report. They focused primarily on reviewing the assessment results as connected with the program goals

### ***The Cohort***

While several factors were reviewed in the determination of this program's success, a primary cohort was the new students themselves. While several likely did not turn in their sign-in sheets, the majority did and therefore the number of participants used for the purpose of this report is 1177. (The number is likely closer to 1550 as gauged by the number of chairs set up and filled that day.)

Of the 1177, reported gender was split evenly down the middle with 50% female and 50% male. 81% were under 20 years old, 12% were in their early 20's, 3% in late 20's and 4% over 30 years old.

About half of these participants placed into English Comp I or higher. 83% were registered for full time matriculation for the fall semester. Participants represented almost every major with the majority (28%) selecting Liberal Studies. Liberal Arts and Sciences made up 13% of the participants.

This fall, close to 70% achieved a 2.0 or higher. 80% are considered in good academic standing. 4% (49) of these students withdrew during the fall semester.

83% of those who attended Opening Day enrolled for the spring of 2010 suggesting a persistence rate (comparable/better??) than the general student population.

### **Section II Mission/Goals**

The Middlesex Community College New Student Orientation Program supports new students in their transition to college life. From application to admission to registration and acclimation, Orientation provides opportunities for every new student to learn about the College, prepare for their personal academic experience, and connect with faculty, staff and other students.

As mentioned previously, the orientation process is complex as it encompasses a variety of touch points along a new student's personal journey. Orient literally means familiarize and adjust and that is precisely what the process of Orientation is designed to do at Middlesex. Unlike many other colleges across the country, MCC accomplishes this over a period of time beginning with the new student's application and continuing through their first semester. Traditional orientation programs have an all-inclusive one-stop agenda and occur over 1 to 4 consecutive days during the summer prior to entering. Due to the nature of the Middlesex Community College student – with multiple commitments, competing priorities, and less fluid schedules – the information and activities designed to orient them occur over time with most having several options for day and time.

Opening Day is often seen as the pinnacle of the Orientation experience. It is offered only on one day (yet on two campuses) and while not a requirement, is a largely attended program with a distinct purpose that cannot be duplicated in any other part of the Orientation timeline – that is to present new students with their fellow classmates in a group setting where they experience a sense of togetherness and joint purpose. (The only other time they experience this in such a magnitude is at their graduation ceremony.)

At the point of Opening Day, the majority of new students have participated in an initial academic advising session, have selected their courses and registered for the fall semester. They have been introduced to comprehensive information about academic requirements and expectations.

## ***Opening Day Goals***

- *Introduce new students to the academic programs, opportunities and expectations of Middlesex Community College.*
- *Foster a sense of connection with the being a member of the MCC community and introduce students to a variety of opportunities to be involved on campus*
- *Familiarize students with the campus environment and facilities.*
- *Provide structured opportunities for new students to meet and develop relationships with faculty, staff, current students and other new students.*
- *Introduce students to services dedicated to student achievement and programs that will support their educational goals*

## ***Complementing the College's Mission and Strategic Plan***

Directly informed by the educational philosophy and practices of the College, as outlined in its mission statement and most recent strategic plan, Opening Day *provides a strong foundation for future endeavors. Dedicated to student success*, the Opening Day planning team, led by Associate Dean of Students Rae Perry, creates an experience that is *student-centered and interactive*. The *on-line learning opportunities and community service* experience offer added opportunity for learning and alongside the other *programs and services for students* that day highlight the *personal attention* we believe is imperative to student success.

According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (7<sup>th</sup> edition, page 322), orientation programs “seek to provide a clear and cogent introduction to an institution’s academic community” and that it is “a comprehensive process rather than a minimal program.” The Middlesex Opening Day Program as a significant piece of the College’s orientation process is intentional in its mission, guided by student development theory and reflective of the values of the institution.

As the 2011-2014 Middlesex Community College Strategic Plan develops , student success continues to emerge as a major institutional priority. Orientation programs, including the Opening Day agenda, serves as a foundation for that success. Paired with first year experience courses and programs, co-curricular involvement, and other student services, the academic curriculum becomes one that is a holistic experience and better grades and retention are inevitable

At the conclusion of the morning, new students have a stronger sense of connectedness to the college, feel supported by the people and resources at Middlesex, have more detailed information about their course of study and other areas of interest, are aware of logistics for meeting basic needs and requirements, and have a better understanding of their role in this community. By laying the groundwork for continued learning and exploration, new students are on a stronger path towards student success.

## **Section III: Program Description and Benchmarking**

### ***Description:***

Similar to previous years, on August 13, 2009 , the first of three batches of mailings was sent to new students. This direct mail includes a letter, map, sample Welcome Month calendar and Common Book information

(Appendix F). All new students registered for day classes by August 31st were invited during the summer. (Later registrants received their invitation on-site upon registering.) The invitation letter also includes information on which campus students are to attend Opening Day as well as the academic major meeting location

In addition to the above mentioned letter, each new student is encouraged to participate in this half-day program through a variety of means. These include advertising at Getting Started presentations (registration sessions throughout the summer) and the MCC website – <http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/newstudentexperiences/orientation.htm>.

As it always has, the 2009 Opening Day Ceremony for New Students took place on the day before classes began. New students were greeted by faculty and staff volunteers and student Orientation Leaders as early as 8:00am. Casual greetings, music and social activities (including a popular contest for prizes) filled the time until the official welcome commenced at 9:00am. During this time students were encouraged to fill out a registration form and review a welcome folder of information intended to guide them through the day's activities as well as resources they may need in the weeks and months ahead (Appendix G).

The Opening Day ceremony officially begins with an opening welcome session where the large group is addressed. On the Lowell campus, students meet in the main ballroom of the UMass Lowell Inn and Conference Center. In Bedford, this session is located under a tent on the campus common. At this assembly there is a greeting from administration (President or Vice President and the Dean and/or Associate Dean) and a Student Leader. The Best Foot Forward slide show is shown in Lowell during this opening session (in Bedford this slide show is reserved for the major group sessions due to lighting and technology set up).

Students are organized into groups based on their applied major and head to those designated locations following the first session. Here they have the opportunity to meet with faculty and peers within their academic field of study. The location of each groups' meeting is listed on a letter that was sent to all new students, which they were asked to bring with them. Orientation leaders and college staff also have lists of locations to help any student who registered later or did not bring their letter.

The academic major meetings are 90 minutes and consist of an overview of major requirements, advising, career and transfer information, goal setting, and opportunities for student involvement (Appendix H). Each room includes the full time faculty from their discipline who organize the introductions, ice breakers, and activities. Students are assigned to academic major meetings in the following clusters:

- Business
- STEM
- Health
- Art, Music, and Communication
- Psychology and Human Services
- Criminal Justice and Legal Studies
- Education
- Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Liberal Studies
- Lowell Connections

Immediately following this session, students are encouraged to attend a special interest session listed on the agenda. Approximately 13 % chose to stay and the remaining participants concluded their participation in the program. Topics to choose from included:

- Study Smarter

- Career Exploration
- Campus Involvement Opportunities
- Multicultural Student Connections
- Get a Head Start on Transferring
- Overcoming Math Anxiety
- Campus Tours
- Seasons of Service Project

Throughout the day, Orientation Leaders (paid students with special training) assist with the process and help students feel welcomed. These students are selected after completing the application process which includes a formal application and essay (Appendix I). Current funding only allows for 12 Orientation Leaders.

### ***Innovative Practices***

Freshmen Orientations have been in practice for new students in American Schools since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The missions and functions of institutions of higher education have impacted the design of these programs over the years and today they are diverse and meet a assortment of needs. For the purposes of this report, an innovative practice is considered that which has impacted students in a positive way, making a difference in their overall MCC experience and ultimately student success. While not necessarily ground-breaking or new to the field, the specific blueprint of the 2009 MCC Opening Day is not only reflective of student development theory, it works well for the unique MCC population.

The MCC Opening Day program is particularly impressive in that it meets the needs of a busy commuter student who in some cases did not want to attend Middlesex (and in some other cases perhaps did not want to attend college at all). One would imagine that this would be a tough audience and the design of the MCC program is customized specifically for this distinctive group of new students. Offered at a convenient time (during when these day students normally would attend classes) and with a brief schedule (approximately 3 hours), these students are able to receive a great deal of information and have their lives only momentarily disrupted. The Opening Day planning team has produced the most efficient schedule that is saturated with practical content as well as intangible benefits.

Under traditional circumstances, an opening day program might include team building exercises in small groups, extravagant meals, novelty and social programming, detailed workshops on important topics, special programs for families, off-campus excursions, and more. It might also be mandatory. While these time consuming (and expensive) options have made a huge impact on a student's experience at colleges and universities across the country, it is the outcomes of these experiences that MCC has focused on and the current agenda achieves those to the extent possible.

### ***Nationwide Benchmarking***

A survey instrument of 22 questions was created by the Program Review team and disseminated to 27 colleges (Appendix J). Fourteen of the twenty-seven institutions are members of the Massachusetts Community College Student Leaders Association (CCSLA) and an additional thirteen colleges are schools that were designated as "like schools" by MCC's institutional research department. Out of the twenty-seven colleges, sixteen schools participated, yielding 59% participation.

In general, Middlesex organizes Opening Day in a similar way to most other colleges that responded. Common activities that take place at many colleges include campus tours, ice breakers, and specialized workshops. Middlesex also covers much of the same material as other schools during the orientation program. Information

that students often learn about include student involvement opportunities, college support services, career and transfer information, and major requirements, all of which are emphasized during Opening Day. Incoming class sizes vary and ratio of those students attending differed substantially across the board. Additional differences among the colleges included the amount of funding allocated to the program, making it difficult to compare budgets.

The only major activity that more than half of the colleges provide which Middlesex does not is serving meals for the students. With the allocated budget, it is impossible to serve meals to all students that attend Opening Day. In addition, there is not enough time scheduled in the day to add any more. Also, 97.3% of colleges that responded include parent or family participation in the orientation process. Currently, Middlesex is creating an online resource page to help students' families and friends better understand and participate in the college transition.

The survey instrument was helpful in determining that Middlesex is offering the most it can for the budget, space and other considerations. There were no new ideas discovered or insightful knowledge learned from this study, but it was useful in validating MCC's current offerings. It was also helpful in providing evidence that when possible an increase in budget may allow for some incidentals that could present improvements.

#### Summary of responses:

- 76.5% of colleges do not make orientation mandatory for all new students
- 100% responded that orientation is one day or less
- 25% invite night students to orientation
- Although 93.8% invite students through the mail, email (50%), phone (56.3%), and in person (75%) invitations are also common
- 93.8% involve parents and families in some part of orientation
- A specific department or office is most commonly responsible for orientation (75%) and the staff involved in planning and execution is primarily from student affairs offices
- For the most part, students are either not divided during orientation (37.5%) or divided by academic major (37.5%)
- Campus tours was the most common activity that happened during orientation (75%) followed by ice breakers (68.8%), specialized workshops (56.3%), and meals (56.3%)
- 93.3% of schools offer a separate orientation for new students who start in the spring semester
- 73.4% of schools employ student leaders to assist in orientation
- The top three duties student leaders are responsible for are giving campus tours (71.4%), attending training sessions (50%), and leading orientation groups (50%)

### Program Comparison with “Like Schools”

College	Incoming class	Students attended	Budget	\$ per student	Student Leaders	# of days	Meals	Divided by	Families particip.	Required
Northern Essex CC	1,600	250 (15%)	\$6,000	\$24	1-10	<1	Yes	Major	Yes	
Mass Bay CC	1,000	600 (60%)	\$30,000	\$50	1-10	<1	Yes	Major	Yes	
Cape Cod CC	400	200 (50%)	\$5,000	\$25	1-10	<1	No	No	Yes	Yes
Mott CC	N/A	6,500	N/A	N/A	0	<1	No	No		Yes
North Shore CC	2,000	1,080 (54%)	\$20,000	\$18	1-10	<1	No	No	Yes	
Greenfield CC	1,000	200 (20%)	\$5,000	\$25	1-10	<1	Yes	Major	Yes	
Anon.	1,000	350 (35%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	Yes	No	Yes	
Anon.	1,000	400 (40%)	\$200	\$.50	0	<1	Yes	Random	Yes	
Bristol CC	2,500	1,100 (44%)	N/A	N/A	1-10	<1	Yes	Major	Yes	
Anon.	2,225	700 (31%)	\$8,000	\$11	11-20	<1	Yes	Major	Yes	
Mt. Wachusett CC	2,546	1,000 (39%)	\$3,500	\$3.50	21-30	<1	Yes	Special	Yes	
Holyoke CC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11-20	<1	No	Major	Yes	
Quinsig. CC	800	600 (75%)	\$4,000	\$7	11-20	1	No	Clubs	Yes	
Berkshire CC	1,200	400 (33%)	\$8,000	\$20	1-10	1	Yes	No	Yes	
Polk CC	1,500	200 (13%)	\$0	\$0	0	<1	No	No	Yes	
Anon.	2,000	150 (7%)	\$0	\$0	0	<1	No	Major	Yes	Yes
Middlesex CC	2,500	1,550 (60%)	\$5500	\$3.50	12	<1	No	Major	No	No

## ***Constituencies Impacting Opening Day***

External constituencies impact the direction of the Opening Day design as much as fiscal and other limitations allow. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is the leading source for assessing student affairs practice. The levels set by the council are consistently reviewed and the Opening Day team leader is committed to maintaining their degree of excellence.

Professional Associations such as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) has been a critical resource in keeping staff informed and up-to-date with current trends in the field. In order to maintain the level of service offered to students, it is imperative to stay connected to this organization, read their journals, and attend their conferences. Middlesex and the Student Affairs staff are not currently members of The National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) and it is worth visiting that possibility in the coming year.

Internally, other departments play a key role in the direction of this program. The Engagement Specialist and The Student Activities & Recreation Staff are most directly involved in the planning and implementation of this day along with the Assistant Dean of Academic and Community Partnerships and Assistant Dean of International Students. Under the direction of the Associate Dean for Student Development, they are directly responsible for the training, set up, and hands-on implementation of the program.

Additionally, the Coordinator of Advising, Enrollment Staff, Department Heads and Division Deans have been instrumental in the brainstorming, assisting with potential obstacles, collaborating on changes/additions to the program, and recruiting staff and faculty volunteers to assist with the delivery of services that day.

Student Orientation Leaders and volunteers are key to setting the tone for the day and their detailed training prepares them well for this role. Support and participation from the President, administration, faculty and staff is also crucial to the success of this program. This is an all-college event that requires support from everyone and participation from as many as possible.

## ***Adequacies/Inadequacies***

In order to accurately and objectively review the adequacies and inadequacies of the current Opening Day Program, the Program Review committee independently read and together completed the CAS self-assessment. This guide asks staff to make judgments about a wide range of program expectations. The committee discussed each standard and revealed their personal responses and were not surprised to learn that similar perspectives were shared by all (Appendix K). The group then addressed the strengths and weaknesses and these are reflected below.

The budget is too small for the large numbers served on Opening Day. In order to improve upon the experience for students as it relates to feeling connected and part of a community, additional funds are needed to cover incidentals such as food and give-aways.

Facilities often present a challenge and the planning committee does its best to find creative solutions to space concerns. Larger venues for assembly would be helpful in executing pieces of the program, but since that is not possible at this time, tight quarters are reserved for anticipated smaller groups. In the event that more students are present than expected, back up rooms will continue to be offered for over flow.

Staff is always a treasured resource and in this case a necessity. There is currently one secretary who handles the massive volume of work associated with mailings and student contact during the summer prior to the

program. An additional part time secretary or other summer help is needed for smoother operations in preparation of the day.

#### **Section IV: Program Impact and Effectiveness**

The ongoing, annual assessment of the identified program outcomes will occur in a variety of ways and will be reflected in the division's annual reports. Assessment tools will include qualitative and quantitative observations, formal and informal verbal evaluation and feedback, an annual assessment meeting, benchmarking in order to stay on top of current trends, intuition, and student participation rates. As program outcomes are assessed and resources are hopefully increased, revisions will take place annually.

#### ***Opportunities and Activities for Achievement of Program Goals***

<b>Program Outcome</b>	<b>Activity A</b>	<b>Activity B</b>	<b>Activity C</b>	<b>Activity D</b>
Introduce new students to the academic programs, opportunities and expectations of MCC.	Opening Plenary	Academic Major Presentation	Optional Workshops	Handouts and In Step Guide
Foster a sense of connection with the being a member of the MCC community and introduce students to a variety of opportunities to be involved on campus.	Opening Social Activities & Opening Session	Icebreakers and Group Activities During the Major Session	Student Involvement Optional Workshop & Optional Service Activity	Handouts and In Step Guide
Familiarize students with the campus environment and facilities.	Moving to New Spaces Throughout the Agenda	Optional Campus Tours		
Provide structured opportunities for new students to meet and develop relationships with faculty, staff, current students and other new students.	Academic Major Group Session Activities	Optional Workshops and Service Activity		
Introduce students to services dedicated to student achievement and programs that will support their educational goals.	Academic Major Session	Optional Workshops		

## *Analysis of Evidence*

The assessment data reveals that the 2009 Opening Day Program was effective, efficient, and satisfactorily met the goals listed above. This conclusion is a result of the culmination of assessment techniques used primarily qualitative and quantitative observations and benchmarking.

In comparison to like schools, MCC's Opening Day Program is comparable or better in most cases. Best practices sited at other colleges have been implemented at Middlesex if possible. Those colleges offering special programs and incidentals such as fairs and food have a stronger budget to do so. Institutions with more time or less participants, more money or better space, etc. may have been able to do additional activities or hire more staff.

Electronic survey was sent to 172 faculty, staff and administrators assigned to sessions (Appendix L). A response rate of 38.9% is broken down below:

- 58.2% Faculty (39)
- 35.8 % Professional Staff (24)
- 6 % Administrator (4)

According to the responses, the day was met with very positive feedback and the new format was viewed as a great improvement over previous years. Close to 90% of respondents recommend this format for future years.

Respondents praised the focus on developing a connection within academic majors. Specific majors with a clear focus benefited from the new format and the day was viewed as a successful start towards building relationships within the major. The focus for LA/LS students was less clear.

The Student Activities slideshow was very successful but some thought that it went too fast to read all of information or that live video might have made it stronger. Others thought it was great "as is."

The Academic Support video was met with mixed reviews and some concerns were raised about content and choice of student speakers. 45 % of the rooms did not show it.

The Liberal Arts/Liberal Studies rooms with the S.M.A.R.T. Goals exercise also had mixed reviews. Some facilitators liked the activity while others thought that it although it was good in concept, it should be done 1-1 or if more time was available.

The icebreaker activity was also another positive feature and several rooms changed or added elements for their particular group of students

Some rooms had technical issues which impacted their ability to view the slideshow and videos. Space was an issue for CJ/Legal studies in Bedford.

Faculty and staff overall praised the organization, materials and logistics involved in the implementation of the program

There were mixed reviews about the length of time involved. Some facilitators thought the session was too long with too much content and others thought that it was too short and did not have enough time to cover everything.

The student responses yielded a similar reaction to the Opening Day program (Appendix M). Four hundred Evaluations were emailed to random sample from Student Check-in Forms (200 each campus; 36% of returned forms). Due to the need to get surveys to students quickly, while information was fresh in their mind, it was not

possible to send every participant an evaluation. Students were not entered into the Student Information System (Banner) until October and therefore it was determined that 400 was a reasonable number to work with manually prior to then. The response rate was 25% - 51 participants (24 Bedford & 27 Lowell)

The majority of respondents indicated that on some level they felt welcomed and ready to be an MCC student (over 90%). The majority felt it was a worthwhile activity and they received helpful information.

63 % (29) students responded that they did not attend a Student Interest Session. All of the students who responded that they did attend one of these sessions (36.8 % -17 students) “agreed/somewhat agreed” that the session was helpful and informative.

## **Section V: Conclusions**

### ***Strengths and Weaknesses***

It is clear from the benchmarking and self-assessment using the CAS standards, that the Opening Day Program is meeting the requirements for serving new students in their transition to the College. A strong itinerary developed by multiple people and with a strong foundation based on student development theory was a huge asset in achieving the program goals. The dedication of the Program’s chair and her team also continues to be a major strength as are the countless staff, faculty and students who play important roles throughout the year in preparation and delivery that day.

Marketing Opening Day as part of the larger Orientation journey allowed people a visual of where it fits in the overall picture and this was helpful on many levels. Staff and faculty could articulate its purpose better and new students were able to connect the dots as well. It likely did not result in higher attendance (which was never the goal), but rather allowed for more people to realize its goals. It is believed that slightly higher numbers were due to increased enrollments for fall of 2009.

The Program’s weaknesses stem from a variety of sources, most beyond the control of its organizers. Greatly impacting the program’s growth are funding deficiencies, staffing shortages, space, equipment and technology needs. These need to be addressed institutionally based on other college priorities.

An annual challenge remains to be the power struggle for control over the Program. For the first time the College recognized that Orientation is a process and each piece was necessary to achieve the ultimate goal of student success. This was helpful in releasing some of the tension and anxiety related to who will make important decisions relating to planning and implementation of Opening Day. The planning team made up of various people playing vital roles in Orientation as a whole and overseen by someone with knowledge and experience was a great strength for 2009. Had the team come together earlier it may have been and even stronger collaboration with a more seamless operation. The group has already started meeting for 2010 which is a good sign.

**Action Plan/Anticipated Needs**

<b>Program Needs</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Proposed Plans for Improvement</b>	<b>Resources Needed for Improvement</b>	<b>Proposed Timelines for Implementation</b>
1. Budget Increase	1. Increase in enrollment and costs of doing business plus additional initiatives including food and merchandise	1. Request and defend increase annually	1. Larger operating budget	1. Request \$10,000 increase for FY11
2. Part time secretary/summer staff	2. Workload demands in preparation for the Program are excessive for one person	2. Alert VP of need	2. Staffing	2. Propose hire as prioritized with needs of the division
3. More Orientation Leaders	3. The ratio of OL to student is approximately 1:130. Ideally it would be reduced to 1:40 for more individualized attention and to assign to specific majors	3. Alert VP of need	3. Staffing/Budget	3. Request additional funding for FY11
4. Better Technology	4. Some rooms experienced technical difficulties; some rooms could not be assigned due to lack of technology	4. Complete a thorough assessment of what is needed and alert VP	4. Purchase of equipment	4. Request for FY11/FY12
5. Add a Family Orientation Component	5. MCC offers very little for students' primary support system	5. Begin to add pieces to entire Orientation experience	5. Initially minimal resources needed	5. Begin by adding On-line piece for FY11
6. Consider Special Populations	6. Currently there is not a program designed specifically for evening students, honors students, dual enrollment students, etc. May or may not be beneficial	6. Begin exploring evidence that may support individual orientation programs or outreach to these groups	6. Initially minimal resources needed	6. Begin reviewing during 2010-2011 academic year