

**Sense of Belonging Best Practices**

**OHIO UNIVERSITY DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

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**Sense of Belonging Best Practices**

1. Student Affairs/outside the classroom impact is more critical in the first two years for creating a students’ sense of belonging
2. Branded Identities, class brands
3. For first gen students: Connecting with parents
4. Peer to Peer interactions/mentoring
5. Encouraging jobs/work study/FAFSA information (financial literacy)
6. Alumni/sophomore liaison relationships for internships
7. Evaluating co-curricular activities beyond participation
8. Academic/Student affairs integration

**Question Bank**

The Sense of Belonging Question Bank was developed to better assist you in understanding the impact your program, service, event or student group has on developing participants’ sense of belonging. The question bank is designed to encompass the different aspects of sense of belonging (welcomed, safe, connecting, etc.). Survey questions are designed to be ranked on a Likert Scale. You should aim to replace **“program/service/event/student group”** with the **specific name** of your program, service, event or student group.

Example instructions to participant:

*Please indicate your agreement with the following statement using the following scale:*

*Strongly Disagree     Disagree         Agree       Strongly Agree*

**Overall:**

1. As a result of participating in this program/service/event/student group, I feel a stronger sense of belonging to the Ohio University *community*.
2. I feel proud to be a student at Ohio University.

**Welcome:**

1. I feel welcomed by the staff of this program/service/event/student group.

 **Safe:**

1. At the end of this program/service/event/student group, I felt safe to be who I am.
2. At the end of this program/service/event/student group, I felt more confident about my personal safety at Ohio University.

**Connection and Integration:**

1. I made a social connection at this program/service/event/student group.
2. By attending this program/service/event/student group, I made a potential friend who could support me (socially or academically).
3. By attending this program/service/event/student group, I feel myself to be more connected/integrated to the Ohio University community.

**Care and support:**

1. I believe people in this program/service/event/student group care about me.
2. I feel this program/service/event/student group supports my success at Ohio University.

**Personal identities and attributes valued:**

11.   Participating in this program/service/event/student group made me feel like I am valued.

12.   This program/service/event/student group helped me believe that I can find people who are like me at Ohio University.

11.   I feel open to growing my personal identity at Ohio University.

**First 40 Days**

The first 40 days are an integral part to creating a sense of belonging for students on campus. Previous research and various programs at universities across the world attribute increased academic performance and retention to these extended new student orientation program.

**Components of a successful Welcome Week are:**

* Embed programming into the student life to make it **mainstream**. Opt out options should be utilized rather than opt in.
* Aim to **proactively** engage with students. Don’t wait for the student seeking help to reach out.
* The activities should be **relevant** to them. Benefits to participation should be explicit.
* Determine the right **time** and **approach.** Students are inundated with information and opportunities throughout their day.
* Activities should encourage **collaboration** between fellow students and staff.

**Outcomes of a successful Welcome Week at Ohio University:**

* Provide information
* Inform expectations
* Develop academic skills
* Build social capital (links with peers, current students and staff)

 **“What will you do in the first 40 days?”**

DOSA All-Staff Fall 2019

These responses were shared during the Division of Student Affairs All-Staff meeting in Fall 2019. A report was given on the impact the First 40 Days have on student sense of belonging. Division staff were prompted to answer, “What will you do in the first 40 days?” This document is shared to inspire ways to connect with students during the first 40 days.

**Resources to share**

* Share resources and events
* Culinary tours
	+ Fitness programs and what we offer at Ping throughout our Welcome Week
* How can I best guide them to people who can help them?
* Positive on campus engagement
* Ring in campus partners
* Drop in hours

**Talking with students**

* Affirm to clients “I am glad you’re here”
* Do you feel good about coming to OU?
* What do your social circles look like?
* Encourage students to engage in student activity and different groups available
* Encourage students to do things outside of their comfort zone
* Start asking students how they are doing in their classes
* Engaging in conversation and to encourage them that they are going to be okay
* Encourage social involvement on campus
* Make it more personal than work related
* Check on classes, stresses, and well-being
* Tell them about special events
* Ask about living situation
* Ask about work/life balance
* Ask about what they hope to learn from their job
* Set goals
* Check on connections to campus
* Check in and follow up
* Get to know them

**Events**

* Grad student social
* Get involved in different events
* Staff social events
* Meetings w/ office hours
* One on One meetings
* Go with students to events
* Use social media to advertise events
* Go to welcome week events
* Promote events early and often
* More accessible calendar

**Other**

* Recognition and reward
* Interact with new people
* Open door policy
* Help confused first years when you see them
* Give students a sense of belonging, especially student employees

**Well-Being and Retention**

The committee for Retention and Graduation was invited to review the literature surrounding the Ohio University Well-being Model. Connections between well-being and retention are similar to that of sense of belonging. The Ohio University Well-Being Model is comprised of four elements: Purpose, Resilience, Relationship, and Achievement. What follows is a summary of the literature surrounding these elements and their impact on well-being.

**Common Elements that Contribute to Well-Being Priorities: A Literature Review**

Barten, B., Broughton, K., Cogswell, C., Gruenke, J., Kennedy, M.K., Lovins, N., Yang, L.

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