

Orientation

Welcome to boot camp — sorry — Orientation Week at Dalhousie University.

Although this thought is never articulated, most first year students find their initial week on campus something like an army training camp. Do this, do that, obey upper-class students are common phrases on campus during the week.

The rigidly-planned week, full of games, exercises and a few dances is enough to exhaust and frustrate anyone. It is not an orientation in the true sense of the word. Nothing is learned about the university, or the community we are now in by being told what to do, where to go constantly. Even if others have gone through it, that is no reason to subjugate new students to this authoritarian program.

Alternatives must be found. Students are people, not objects to be used at random at someone's whim. If they are to be oriented to the new environment, then have useful and educational programs.

New students are often confused about rules and regulations on campus, about what courses to take, how to survive the year without getting screwed up. Why not ask them what they want to know about the university? After all, the programs are supposed to be for them.

At the University of British Columbia last year, they had a week full of discussions, talks and fun. Some professors spoke about the nature of the university, relevant political issues and American investment in Canada. Students discussed the need for a student union and student politics in general. There were also the usual dances and speeches by campus big-wigs.

At Dal, this could be adjusted to the setting. We have the largest percentage of out-of-province students of any Canadian university. They should know about the province and community in which they will be spending three or more years of their

versus

interaction



life. Discussions about local and campus problems, unique to the area, would be informative and interesting.

Students should also know about the university and university life. Discussions could be held with senior students about the nature of the university, who runs it, or how to get through without getting lost in the crowd. Hints from experienced people always come in handy. And they are very relevant to a student's future here.

The course evaluation booklet should be revived so that all students, not just those in first year, know something about their courses and professors. Another suggestion might be to hold discussions about the teaching methods and how students would like to have their courses run. New ideas are sure to come up from new students.

Orientation should also provide a chance to meet new people and have fun. Dances and social events are fine, but large events tend to isolate people, rather than bring them together. Small coffee house-type gatherings or jam sessions could lower this barrier. The SUB has ample space to handle these events.

The important thing is not to isolate the new students in a group by themselves. Events should be open to all students. Admission could be charged to all students for every event, if necessary. This way, there is nothing special about being a new student. The degrading word "frosh" might be lost from the campus vocabulary, and "first year student" substituted for it.

It's too late to do anything about this year's program, but whoever makes the plans for next year should first talk to first year students and find out what they liked or didn't like about "their" week this year. They should also be asked what they think of various alternatives. Then, perhaps we would have a real orientation.

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GAZETTE workshops

Saturday:

7-10 p.m. — Discussion of our purpose. Where are we heading?

Sunday:

1:30-4:30 — Newswriting

and research seminar — Derek Mann.

7-10 p.m. — Layout, photography seminars — Errol Young, staff.

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