



Western Oregon University's Challenge

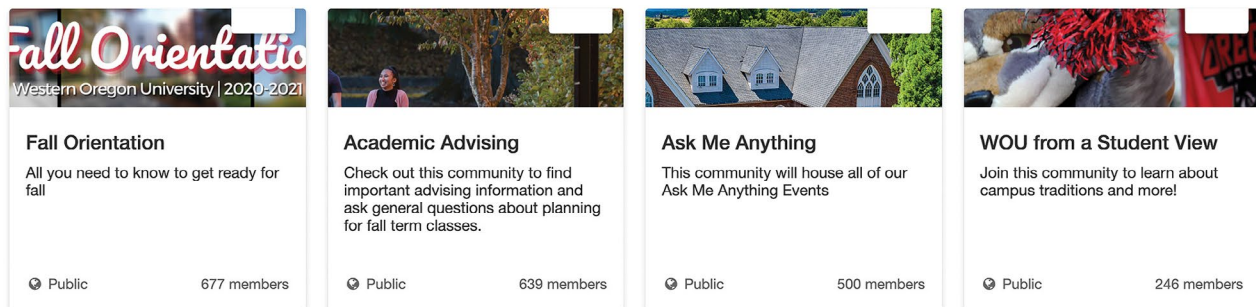
Western Oregon University, located about an hour south of Portland, knew they needed to adapt their two-tier styled orientation model to the current climate. With current restrictions on in-person programming, the staff at Western Oregon was also cognizant of the shifting landscape of higher education and the barriers that prevent students and families from joining their institution. Orientation models traditionally carve out an additional trip to a student's chosen university, trips that make some institutions inaccessible to students for various reasons including the economy, time restraints, and travel. Due to the mix of these factors, Western Oregon University chose to pursue an online orientation solution but struggled with understanding how their extremely personal and engaging approach would translate to an online model.

Why Wisr

When looking for an online orientation platform, it was important for it to mimic the personal and engaging experience typically provided by Western Oregon. "I had been looking at online orientation solutions, but all the others had been so passive and almost completely excluded orientation leaders," said Megan Habermann of Student Engagement. "Those could work for other schools, but our biggest selling point is our **community and feeling of family**. I could see student leaders getting involved and making the platform better with their unique ideas." Wisr's Orientation suite proved to be a great fit because of how **user-friendly and configurable** the site was to WOU's specific needs. Additionally, Wisr's turnaround time matched WOU's timeline well as they began talks mid-May and implemented the site on June 8th. The transition and the designated support team allowed WOU to launch for their Summer Orientation and later their Fall Orientation.

Results

According to Habermann, Western Oregon University essentially implemented Wisr’s Orientation solution in two phases. The launch aided in their Summer Orientation and then they were able to refine the site with any feedback they received and have that up and running for their Fall Orientation. During the Summer Orientation, their Student Orientation Advising and Registration (SOAR) event, normally 5 days over the course of the summer, was transitioned into a hybrid program of students completing online modules and then participating in virtual advising to get assistance with classes. The virtual advising launched with a three day drop in advising event with additional events and one-on-one advising throughout the summer.



Beginning with the Summer Orientation model allowed some growing pains to come to light. Upon seeing that the site did not see high levels of active producers, first-year students responding to discussions, posts, etc., the Student Engagement team met with our designated Customer Success team to strategize solutions. Below are some of the creative solutions they came up with to take their student engagement to the next level.



- Incentivized raffle program
- Promotional videos of Wolfie, the WOU mascot, getting students excited about WOU Network
- Personalized welcome videos crafted by each orientation leader.
- Content Creators Hub—training area with recordings and modules for faculty, staff, and students
- Sand Box—housing drafts and trial practices before the solution was coded into the site

The combination of these elements resulted in a seamless program that both faculty, staff, and students could transition to their Fall Orientation. An online orientation program allowed Western Oregon to produce certain "On Demand" elements that could be permanently housed on WOU network. This element allowed levels of transparency to new students on sessions they may have been unable to attend but can now still receive all the appropriate information without jumping through too many hoops.

1800+discussion topics
and posts**90%**of first year & transfer
students joined the site**96%**of students have actively
consumed content on
the site since joining

Looking Forward

Western Oregon University's Student Engagement team recognizes the value their campus adds to making students feel at home and part of the WOU community. "We've been able to adapt all of our in-person programming to the platform and have it be just as successful if not more successful in some ways than previously," said Habermann. A student segment that has benefitted greatly from this transition is their transfer population. The state of Oregon provides free community college for residents, so institutions such as Western Oregon have seen an uptick in transfer students. With many orientation programs being geared at first-years, Western Oregon was able to configure WOU Network to build communities for their transfer students and house all their information online so they too felt they were firmly in the community and welcomed as new students.

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Megan Habermann
Student Engagement