



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Hunting for Orientation Ideas

To liven up City College's orientation program for new faculty and staff, the college's orientation committee decided to add a playful activity—a scavenger hunt. Until last year, City College had no organized orientation program for new personnel. Most new hires had to fend for themselves. An energetic new administrative staff, combined with proactive faculty and staff, organized an orientation program modeled on the one designed at Riverside Community College and published in *Innovation Abstracts* (Volume XI, Number 1).

Each City College seminar contained several components which ranged from ice-breaking activities, such as one in which the participants talked about something nice that happened to them that week, to heavier-duty sessions dealing with individual risktaking and teaching techniques.

As a *lagniappe*, for the last session, the President's Orientation Committee for Professional Staff (POPS) decided to create a scavenger hunt which would serve as a preliminary warm-up activity to a party hosted by the president. It, therefore, came as a surprise when the participants ranked the scavenger hunt as one of the most important orientation activities. Several of the participants stated that they saw areas of the campus they had never known existed, and, more important, they experienced the genuine friendliness of the veteran staff.

To actuate the scavenger hunt, the POPS committee formed a sub-committee of three of its members—two staff supervisors and a faculty person. This sub-committee was charged with designing a scavenger hunt which would cover the entire campus site (approximately 34 acres) and all the key campus facilities. The hunt had to be both playful and educational. The time from start to finish had to be 75 minutes or less.

The committee divided its task into five parts:

- 1) Select the target locations and facilities.
- 2) Chart the route of the hunt and decide on the treasures that the hunters would have to scavenge at each location.
- 3) Contact a key person at each location both to suggest appropriate "treasures" and to appoint someone as a host for the duration of the hunt.

- 4) Generate the flyers, reminders, handouts, and clues.
- 5) Manage the actual hunt.

The first thing that the sub-committee did was to select the facilities which would comprise the targets of the scavenger hunt. Selection was based on the following criteria:

- Importance of site to hunters—security offices, duplication services, etc.
- Importance of site for campus geographical orientation—most northern and western points of campus, etc.
- Importance of site for students—student health service, counseling, computer centers, etc.—so that new faculty could send students to correct locations.

Once the sites were selected, the committee members mapped out a route and walked it to determine whether it would be feasible to complete in the allocated time. Also, while walking the route, members spoke to key personnel at each site, asking for suggestions regarding items that the hunters might be asked to scavenge.

The hunt committee decided that to maintain the playful nature of the scavenger hunt, the "treasures" should range from useful to silly. Therefore, along with things such as requisition forms, parking rule forms, and application forms, the hunters had to return with helium-filled balloons, information on the number of living plants in a room, the name of the store across from the theater, and "artificial dollars" with the college president's portrait instead of George Washington's. (We called these Jeanny Bucks after Jeanne Atherton, the college president.)

Once the route was determined and the treasures assigned, the committee wrote a memo to a key person in each area. The memo, which was sent out three weeks prior to the event, explained the reasons for the scavenger hunt, told the time and place of the hunt, and requested that a person be assigned to greet the hunters warmly and give them the "treasure" that was requested. A reminder memo was sent out three days before the actual event.

After sending out the first memos, the committee wrote the clues, designed flyers and phony dollars with the president's picture, and arranged to have helium and balloons at one of the treasure sites.

The committee decided, for the sake of efficiency, that each of the hunters be provided with a map which



highlighted the 16 treasure sites. The committee felt that walking the route in 75 minutes would provide sufficient challenge for the hunters. To make the hunt amusing, the clues were made deliberately obtuse.

Two weeks before the scavenger hunt, the committee sent the hunters an invitation designating the time and place of the event.

When the time arrived, the scavengers were greeted in a festive manner and clustered randomly into groups of five. One member of each group was designated informally as a group leader and given a map and a list of scavenger hunt clues. The group was instructed to return in 70 minutes with as many treasures as they could scavenge.

Scavenger Hunt Clues

1. Bring back the brochure "7 Steps to Admissions for City College."
2. Bring back a copy of City's parking regulations.
3. Bring back the signature of the City College person you call when you're too sick to come to school.
4. Bring back a buck from the place you pick up your check.
5. Bring back the signature of the screening counselor.
6. Bring back the name of a store that faces the theater box office.
7. Bring back an Infotrac printout on pollution or toxic waste.
8. Bring back an athletic event schedule from the place where the women coaches make their plans to coach the women.
9. Bring back a form that allows you to reproduce.
10. Bring back the room numbers next to the room where the handicapped students are counseled.
11. Bring back a completed form for ordering an AV film, tape, or other aid.
12. Pick up a flyer in the room with all the Apples and Macintoshes.
13. Bring back any health service brochure.
14. Get an authorization to post the flyer you picked up, and bring it back.
15. Bring back a balloon from the place where we learn to care about children.
16. Bring back the number of living plants in Tutorial Services.

Evaluation

The hunters all returned within the time allotted for the search. Most returned laughing. Several people remarked that they never realized that the college had so many facilities. Others said that they really enjoyed

working with the other members of their group. Just about everybody said that they wished that the scavenger hunt had come earlier in the orientation program. There were no negative comments.

As a result of these actions, the POPS committee decided to move the hunt from the last activity to the second. The first activity will be an introduction to the orientation sessions and to the philosophy and vision of the college. The committee is planning no major changes to the format or structure of the hunt itself.

The entire POPS committee was taken by surprise at the participants' reactions. When the idea for the scavenger hunt was first suggested, the POPS committee members felt that, at best, it would serve to lighten a fairly heavy-duty orientation program. One or two of the committee members even expressed concern that the hunt might seem too childish and cause resentment. None of the POPS committee thought that the reaction would be as enthusiastic as it was. One of the new teachers summed up the effect of the scavenger hunt very nicely when he remarked that it made the college "less concrete and more heart."

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