Creating a memorable Welcome Week

By Laurie Germeraad Kagay
Personal introduction

- BA in Biblical Studies from The Institute for GOD
- MA in Theology and Ministry from Welch College
- Enough-to-get-by Graphic Designer since High School
- Bible Teacher
- 15 years of experience in nonprofit communications
- Engaged in mission work to East Africa
- Fundraiser
- Now Marketing and Enrollment VP

- One player on a dynamic team that puts on “iconic” welcome weeks at The Institute for GOD
John’s 3rd Epistle and hospitality to strangers

5 Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you.

6 They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God.

7 It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans.

8 We ought therefore to **show hospitality to such people** so that we may work together for the truth...

11 Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. For whoever does what is good is from God.
A story of “no help”

- College Basketball Player
- Straight-A Student
- Moved 4 states away from his family for a full ride
- One month into college, his life changed forever
A Parent Review:

- I don’t know your school.
- I love my son.
- I feel like I just dropped him off in a parking lot and drove away.

Then crisis hits...
“What’s the best way to ensure we get mission fit students?”

1. Pray over each applicant
2. Vet appropriately
3. Put on an awesome welcome week
Students are the least prepared for college than they’ve been in three decades. (The Hill)

4 out of 10

High school seniors hit NONE of the college readiness benchmarks.

85% of incoming students want to know their friends before getting to college.

(ZeeMee Study)
Today’s teens are less likely to drive, work, go on dates, or go out without their parents. (A survey of 8.3 million teens between 1976-2016 in *Childhood Development*).

Youth depression has doubled since 2011, making the Gen Z’s upbringing as social media guinea pigs the most pessimistic generation we’ve ever seen. (Twenge, *New York Post*)
Students are (most often) strangers to your institution, acclimating to a whole new way of life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 tips for planning a memorable Welcome Week</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know Your Audience</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Involve your admissions team and learn the specifics of your incoming class</td>
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<td><strong>Use Welcome Week as a LaunchPad</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey staff about the “fixes” that need made on campus. Pressurize Welcome Week as the launchpad for new programs &amp; systems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maximize your Resources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Get Sponsors or Get Creative. Remember your most valuable resources are your staff. Play to their strengths!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communicate Early</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with marketing and admissions and customize your CRM to build hype and set expectations with incoming students and their families</td>
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## Welcome Week
**Tuesday, Aug. 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prayer &amp; Devotional</strong></td>
<td>8:00 - 8:30 AM</td>
<td>Institute Main</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mindset of a Student</strong></td>
<td>9:00 - 9:45 AM</td>
<td>Professors Sherrod &amp; Reese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Populi &amp; Logos Onboarding</strong></td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Professors Sherrod &amp; Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>Institute Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dev Talks: Life Hacks Edition</strong></td>
<td>2:00 PM</td>
<td>Student Life Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Dev Intro Meeting</strong></td>
<td>4:00 PM</td>
<td>President Garner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dinner with Your Roommates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nashville You Choose!</td>
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**Executing a memorable Welcome Week**
Don’t forget the parents

- Build in a meal or an event to commemorate this very big moment in families’ lives. Help parents know you are on their side.
- You don’t want them to only hear from you when something hard is happening or when you need more money for scholarships. Make them your fans from the beginning.

Ideas: Refreshment Hours, Parent Meeting, Allow Parents to Meet One Another
Prayer, worship & Bible Studies

This is the reason the students chose your school. Make sure they get plenty of it the first week so they can connect to the Lord in prayer, worship with their new friends, and learn Bible lessons before classes start.

Ideas: Morning devotional with varied faculty, Evening worship and Bible study with the whole student body, Journal prompts
Reduce anxiety about the academic experience by ensuring proper onboarding to learning platforms, and helping them succeed with the tools available to them.

**Ideas:** Logos Bible Software Demos, Library Tours, Answering Questions about your educational model, Lunch with faculty
Tools for the biggest stressor: finance

- Ensure students know how to pay their bills, the consequences of late bills, and who to talk to about their concerns
- Make it fun!

Help students think through the way their job impacts their weekly schedule. Frontloading this conversation prevents class conflicts later.

**Ideas:** Incorporate campus jobs onboarding as a part of your Welcome Week, or Promote jobs available in your city/area.
How would you like sharing a small space with someone you barely know? Create intentional activities to help them through the awkward moments and begin forming friendships.

**Ideas:** Video competitions, Roommates-only dinner, House meetings, Cooking meals together
Campus Acclimation

Take time and make sure students understand your campus, the safety and security provided to them, where they can be, and where they can’t.

Ideas: Campus Scavenger Hunt, Strategizing locations for various Welcome Week Events
Exploring the New City

How are your students learning their new location? Do they know where to open a bank account or visit a doctor? How about just where to wash their car or the favorite local coffee shop? Give them space and time to explore with some rubric of completion before classes begin.

**Ideas:** Nashville Scavenger hunt and social media challenge, City adventures, Welcome Week bingo
Example

Welcome Week Bingo

Complete at least one row for a prize. Two rows for an even better prize!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get some groceries!</th>
<th>Scope out local coffee shop/homework spots.</th>
<th>Get set up at a local bank</th>
<th>Set up your dorm room &amp; share a pic on social media!</th>
<th>Take a walk in the neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook a meal in your new kitchen &amp; pic on social!</td>
<td>Get recommendations &amp; find a nearby mechanic</td>
<td>Attend church and community prayer</td>
<td>Share your faith story with your roommates</td>
<td>Find a local gym &amp; workout with a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a nap (Jesus did.)</td>
<td>Know where to take out the trash</td>
<td>FREE</td>
<td>Call your parents &amp; let them know how you're doing</td>
<td>Find &amp; visit your mentor's house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look up what doctors are in your network in Nashville and keep the info!</td>
<td>Get a Nashville Public Library card and visit a local branch</td>
<td>Make a budget for your personal finances</td>
<td>Change your address with the post office</td>
<td>Meet one of your neighbors (outside of the dorms)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make a workplace post</td>
<td>Post about your life in Nashville on social media</td>
<td>Visit downtown Nashville with a friend!</td>
<td>Put important documents in a safe place</td>
<td>Hear a faith story of at least one alumni</td>
</tr>
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Incorporating students in your campus Community

It’s important to build in times for students to get to know the people who make your school what it is. How are you doing that on your campus?

Idea: Backyard BBQs at your President’s house, Campus church services dedicated to student integration, Fishing with the dean, Kayaking with alumni
Integrating students into your college is an overwhelming process and if you’re not careful, they can sit for way too long. Keep them moving and active with lots of breaks and engaging activities.

**Ideas:** Competitions, Pool Parties, Picnics at the Lake, Bonfires, Movie Nights, Concerts, Snowball Fights, Karaoke Parties, Cooking competitions
Devote time and money to documenting it all:

- Create holy FOMO in future students
- Keep parents informed
- Capture B-Roll useful for future projects
- Fill your social channels with pictures
- Put your channels in the hands of students for an authentic take
Welcome Week is not a hurdle to get over, it’s a marked time for hospitality commemorating something new, that you will continue. It’s the start of their adult life, and you’re there to help them launch into their discipleship journey.
Time for Takeaways

What are 3 things you might add to a future Welcome Week?
Thank You!

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Institute YouTube

College Conversations