



# Initial Transition to the Miami Experience

**Orientation.** Miami's orientation program is a cohesive array of intentionally linked experiences designed to provide a pathway of adjustment to collegiate life. The orientation program is guided by a developmental conceptual framework of constructivism where a student is encouraged to co-create their college experience. Orientation aims to help students become more **curious, confident, comfortable** and **connected**. Orientation hosts about 3,500 first year students annually and is divided into 16, two-day sessions. During the two-day orientation experience, students and family members alike are challenged to reflectively write about the beginning of their collegiate transformation. A 61-item survey was sent to all orientation participants, and 1149 students responded (33.5% response rate). One measure of success is seen in the data that indicates 94% of students report orientation helped them feel **confident** about their transition to Miami. Further, 94% said they were more **comfortable** in the Miami setting, 92% said they were more **connected** to new peers, and 97% stated being more **curious** about their upcoming experience. Reflective comments suggested that students were thinking more about their aspirations and possibilities. Feedback from family members suggested that they learned new information (91%) and 88% of families reported that they talked with their student about campus resources as a result of our program.

## **First Year Summer Reading Book**

Incoming Miami University students were assigned the summer reading book *This I Believe*, edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman. Of the participating students, 84% report having read at least most of the book. 83% of students also enjoyed reading or discussing *This I Believe*. 86% of students thought that discussion leaders were effective in engaging the group in an interesting conversation. Open-ended responses indicate that students enjoyed the book and discussion with peers, thought the book was easy to read and interesting due to the variety of opinions. Students

valued the diverse opinions presented in the book, "enjoyed hearing others' beliefs and thoughts on life" and "liked that it was focused on our personal feelings and challenged us to rethink our opinions."

## **Convocation Ceremony**

A majority of students were enthusiastic about the convocation ceremony. 68% of students felt that convocation made them feel more a part of the Miami community. 61% thought the length of convocation was appropriate. However, only 59% of students enjoyed convocation in part due to the hot weather at the location. Students stated that it "was hard to concentrate fully because of the heat," and that they were "focusing more on how hot it was than the actual ceremony."

## **First Year Institute Events**

Students participated in a number of events throughout the weekend, from community meetings to the large scale Meet & Greet in Millet Hall. These events aimed to familiarize students with campus, allow them to meet other students, and feel connected to the Miami community.

As a result of the events provided by the First Year Institute:

- 90% of students feel more comfortable finding their way around campus
- 88% met new friends
- 87% feel more connected to Miami
- 91% feel excited about being a Miami student
- 93% plan on getting involved in a campus team, organization, or club
- 93% feel optimistic about their ability to succeed at Miami

## **Conclusion**

How students are introduced to the collegiate experience impacts retention, adjustment and ultimately academic success. Miami's initial transition experiences through Student Affairs provide a solid beginning for first-year students.