

Orientation Ceremony and Script Concept

by Stephen B. Friedheim

Introduction

The purpose of the following orientation script is to engage the students in a lively presentation that emphasizes the positive attributes of our educational programs, identifies the role students and the colleges are to play, and to get commitment from the students to behave in a desirable manner. This script does that. It has been used many times; it works, and students enjoy doing it.

The script has been built from the perspective of the principle that ***people move toward those things they think about***. Our role is to keep them thinking about what they want every single day. They want a good job and a great career—this presentation helps them envision that, share it, and commit to it.

There are four very important times in the life of each student.

The **first** is when the student meets with the admissions representative and learns about what the college offers. During this presentation a picture is painted in the mind of the student about what he/she will become when he/she graduates. This is an important step in the graduation process. The stronger the vision is in the mind of the student, the more likely the student will show up on the first day.

The **second** time is this orientation program. Here is an opportunity to lock

the student into the vision and to drill it down into their psyche, so that it becomes real and important to them.

The **third** time that they need to be reminded of this vision is during each class period, when they have to remember that the course they are taking is an essential part of a program to help them qualify for a good job and a great career. Everything that happens at the college must be designed around this objective.

And the **fourth** time is when the student graduates and is successfully placed in a job related to their course of study.

The following Orientation Script has been designed to emphasize the importance of the decision the student made in selecting our college. It sets the stage for the successful conclusion of the student's relationship with us.

The script is a dramatic (and fun) way to ease the students into their new role as a full participant in the education process. Since our college is quite different from any that they might have attended, we must make those differences crystal clear.

Setting the Stage

During the orientation a lot of valuable information is shared, and many housekeeping chores are finalized. So much is shared that very often students forget or don't "hear"

what they are being told. This can result in confusion and a slower than necessary student adjustment to our environment.

In order to overcome the tendency to misunderstand and to “mishear” or not hear what is being shared during orientation, this script injects some fun by encouraging participation in the activity by the new students.

The stage is set for this ceremony by playing “Pomp and Circumstance,” the traditional graduation march. Students have heard this music often and can easily identify with it, particularly when it is referenced in the script. This is important as it sets the mood.

Second, the presenter (school president/director) is dressed in academic garb of gown and hood, which depicts graduation—the desired end result. This is the process of painting a vivid picture in the minds of students about why they chose to enroll at our college and what their real objectives were and are.

The Importance of the Future Picture

This orientation has been developed using persuasive words that graphically depict the student in a success mode. Things are repeated and emphasized in an effort to make sure that our message is understood. The script has been built around the proven concept that *people move toward those things they think about*. The clearer, more vivid the picture, the more likely the student will stay in college and graduate.

People learn in a variety of ways, using a variety of senses. Aristotle advised that education was most effective when it engaged all the senses. The more senses we employ, the more information our students will assimilate. This script uses *visual* elements, such as the gown and

hood; *hearing* such as the music that has a special relationship to graduation, and *hearing* when the student hears himself verbally enunciate his goals; *touch* when the student takes a pen and commits those goals to writing; *seeing* the words as reflected on the page; and *hearing* again when they hear their own voices speaking out loud their goal for attending our college.

There are additional psychological aspects to this presentation. It has been demonstrated that when people verbally commit themselves out loud to someone else, there is a deeper meaning and strength to the commitment. All of these powerful impressions are included as a part of the script.

Delivering on the Promise

The script uses several props to support the learning. For example, an attractive, sample diploma is distributed with the words “Your Name Goes Here” in the middle, giving students an opportunity to imagine what theirs will look like.

Each student is given a Post-it® Note page to use to write the goal that they reiterate during the ceremony.

The centerpiece is the *Certificate of Educational Commitment* that each student receives, which outlines the expectations of the student and the institution. It represents a series of promises that each party makes in clear, concise language. It demonstrates the crucial things that both the school and the student must do in order for them to achieve their goals.

Every member of the college’s faculty and staff must be fully familiar with the terms contained in the commitment. Faculty and staff are required to attend every orientation ceremony and to speak the words out loud as the president/director



STEPHEN B. FRIEDHEIM, former president of AICS, and first chairman of the board of the Career College Association, has been an active participant in the career college sector since 1984. His articles have appeared regularly in these pages. He is offering consulting assistance with his wife, Jan, through Education Systems & Solutions. Their consulting practice includes assistance regarding curriculum devel-

opment, strategic planning, accreditation, networking, in-service training, and acquisitions.

Contact Information:

Stephen B. Friedheim, Strategic Coach
Education Systems & Solutions
5521 Greenville Avenue, Suite 104-268
Dallas, TX 75206
Home Office: (214) 827-5403, Cell: (214) 587-5403
Fax: (214) 887-4810
E-mail: sfriedheim@aol.com

explains them, just as the students are asked to do. It is an excellent way to make sure that the staff and faculty are reminded of the importance of every day: every class must be exciting, every student challenge must be met, and every opportunity to serve the student must be taken. Once orientation is over, the student will expect that the college is going to deliver what is promised. To whatever degree the college's performance differs from the promise, it will result in confusion and dissatisfaction from the students.

Delivering the Script

Each part of the script is based on a workable principle. It has been carefully crafted and tested, and all parts are sequenced and integrated. Deliver the script as written. It is proven. It works! Read the script for the first few times (practice and rehearse it first, so that you won't have to fix your eyes on it). Then graduate to 3" x 5" cards to keep on track. Used as presented here, this orientation will result in better students—students who stay and students who graduate.

ORIENTATION SCRIPT

The session opens with "Pomp and Circumstance" playing as the students take their seats. At the end of the session, play the closing theme from "Star Wars."

President/executive director (*dressed in academic gown and hood*):

Good (morning – afternoon – evening), as (president/executive director) of this institution, I am pleased to welcome you to this orientation session. You will find that this session has been designed to give you an overview of the experiences you can expect at our college. You will discover that we are different in many ways from any educational experience you have had. You will learn that we are here to help you achieve your goals and to succeed on the job.

You may wonder why I'm dressed like this with my academic robe and hood. Or what that music was that was playing before this session started. Can anyone tell me the significance of the music? (*It's "Pomp and Circumstance" traditionally played*

at graduation ceremonies.) Can anyone guess why we would dress like this today? (*Take guesses.*) I'm dressed like this because I wear this gown and hood to our graduation ceremonies. You will see me dressed like this when you graduate. I want you to keep that picture in your mind as a reminder of your goal. When I call your name and you walk across the stage, I will shake your hand and hand you your diploma that designates you as a graduate of this college.

Would you like to see what your diploma will look like? I have a sample here that I would like to pass around. I want you to see it—feel it—imagine your name on it.

The Graduation Ceremony will be an exciting day; I will see you with your bright eyes and a big smile, acting proud as punch, as you should. I'll reach out and shake your hand like this. (*Shake hands with a student in the front row.*) I will feel the confidence in your grip. (*Shake another.*) I will know that you are going to take the skills you learn during the next several months into a new job and you will succeed. (*Shake another.*) You will remember the first day we met and I was standing before you in my gown and you will have one, too. When you walk across that stage that day, this presentation will flash back into your mind and you will remember that I told you how you'll feel, when you graduate. But, we're moving too fast; we have lots of things to do before you graduate.

In order for you to appreciate some information about us, I want to find out something about you. To do that, I am going to ask a few questions about you and why you came to our college.

First, how many of you are sitting next to someone you don't know? Would you please reach out and introduce yourself? An important part of attending college is the opportunity to make new friends. Sometimes these friendships last a lifetime.

My next question is how many of you have attended other colleges before today? Could I see your hands? (*Find out where they went.*)

It is not unusual for students to attend a number of different institutions before arriving on our doorstep. After all, every college isn't right for every student, nor is every student right for every college. The important thing about that question today is that I know you are right for

this college. You know why I can say that with such confidence?

Well, I can say it because you completed our entrance process, you were interviewed by our admissions staff and recommended for admission, and you were invited to attend. We believe that those who sincerely want to reach a goal believe in that goal, and are willing to exert effort toward that goal should be given every opportunity to succeed. Each of you represents the kind of students we want to enroll; students who convinced our admissions staff that they really were serious about wanting to improve their lives. Unfortunately, not every prospect becomes a student; we have to say “no” to some and encourage them to enroll somewhere else. We want only those students who have demonstrated an ability and an interest in learning the skills needed to be successful on the job.

Next question: Why did you enroll at our college? Tell me, what do you want from the skills and abilities you will learn here? Anyone?

(Take answers, which will include job, even good job. Get them to say that they really want more...say that they want a career.)

Job? You want a job? What kind of job? A good job? How many of you have had a job? How many of you could go out and get a job today?

Okay, then job isn't it, is it? What would you say about that job? *(Take responses from students and comment)* Oh, one that pays well—you mean a good job! Is that all you want? What else besides a good job? If you have something better than a job—much, much better than a job—what's it called? *(Wait for the students to volunteer a word or thought.)* A career...you mean you want a good job and a career...a great career! Is that right? You want a good job and a great career?

Well, let me hear you say it; what do you want?

I want a good job and a great career!

I can't hear you; please say it again louder.

I want a good job and a great career!!

Is that really what you want? Then say it so they can hear it all over the college!

I want a good job and a great career!!!

Great! You may think that it's silly for me to ask you to say it out loud, but psychologists tell us

that our mind can help us achieve our goals when we are clear about what we want. Saying it out loud is an important part of the process, because our mind will believe something that it hears us say. So, when we tell our mind what our goal is out loud, it takes on an increased level of importance.

Please say it once again with feeling: What is it you want?

I want a good job and a great career!

Okay, now tell your neighbor, with emotion, what you want. Tell someone sitting next to you what you want.

I want a good job and a great career!!

Do you know what you have just done? You have taken the second step in the envisioning process. First you said it, so that you could hear your voice; that's important. But then you told someone else what you wanted. That's even more important, because now you know that someone else knows what you want. That's even more powerful than just telling yourself.

But there is one more step, a step that is even more important than the first two; so, here is your first assignment. Get out a pencil or a pen. Now, take this Post-it® Note (*pass out a 2" x 2" blank Post-it® Note to everyone*) and write this down: “I (*my name*) want a good job and a great career,” and then sign it.

See me after class if you don't know what your name is; I'll help you out. I want you to take this Post-it® home and put it on the mirror in your bathroom, so that every morning when you wake up and go in to brush your teeth, you'll see the words that say...what?

I want a good job and a great career!!

That's right—a good job and a great career. That having been said...and believed, you will make every other decision that day to contribute to your goal of a good job and a great career. That's our goal for you, too. We are here for you, each of you, night and day, day and night, to do whatever we can to assist you to reach your goal of a good job and a great career.

Over the years, we've learned a lot from our successful students. We've learned how to best present material in the classroom; we've learned how to best explain the things students need to know to graduate. The most important thing we've

learned is that the most successful students are those who have the clearest vision of what they want and why they enrolled in our college. This confirms what the psychologists tell us:

People move toward those things they think about.

That's worth remembering. You might want to write that down:

People move toward those things they think about.

The clearer you are about your vision, and the more often you think about it, the more likely you are to do it.

Now, you must know that to be successful you will have to do more than think about it—you must also do something about it. We will, too; we will have to do something about helping you be successful.

So, today, on behalf of our entire staff and faculty, I am going to make a commitment to you, and I am going to ask you to make a commitment to me and to yourself.

To do this, I want to review a copy of our ***Certificate of Educational Commitment*** with you. (*Pass out the Certificates.*)

As you will see, the name of the college is indicated on the top line. The next line is for your name. Would you please print your name there?

This Certificate begins with a statement that reads, "This Educational Commitment reflects an understanding of the contribution needed to ensure the successful achievement of your desired goal." And what's that goal? (*All together.*) "To graduate with the necessary skills to qualify for a good job and a great career."

That is what you told me, isn't it? That you wanted a "good job and a great career"? Well, here's how together we're going to make that happen.

Let me read the list of commitments this college will make to you:

To work with you on an individual basis with respect for your needs and abilities.

We know that you are all different, with different needs and abilities. We're going to take

that into account as we teach you the skills you need to be successful.

To facilitate your learning in an interesting and positive manner.

Learning is hard; it's sometimes harder for some than others. We pledge to make your learning as interesting as we can, so that you'll want to come back tomorrow for your next class.

To fairly and impartially grade and evaluate your performance.

This is an important feature, because you need to know that grading and evaluating your performance is our way of gauging how well you are doing. We pledge to do it fairly and impartially.

To rapidly report your grades on tests and projects.

We believe that you need to know how well you are doing all along the way. To help you to improve and grow, we will report on your grades as quickly as possible.

To reward your hard work and positive manner.

We know that learning can be hard work, so we have rewards for attendance, good grades, and other special achievements. Rewards that include sweatshirts and even money! You earn it, you'll get it.

To expect your best effort.

Moving toward graduation will require that you put forth your best effort. That is what we will be doing with you, and we will expect the same from you.

To start classes on time with prepared faculty.

We think we have hired the best available faculty; that's one of our goals. We believe that you deserve the best teachers, so that you can be the best learners.

To support any learning difficulties with additional help.

We recognize that some of us sometimes have difficulties understanding and comprehending the courses we are taking. It could be a math problem, an English problem, or a technical concept. That's okay, it happens. When it does, we will be there for you for extra help and attention after class, before class, or whenever you need it.

This next section covers the commitment of the student to the college. I would like each of you to read these statements out loud, starting with:

To attend all classes and arrive on time.

Do you know why this one is so important? (*Take answers.*) There are two real reasons: First, everything that happens in this college happens for a reason, and the reason is it ties in with your goal of qualifying for a good job that leads to a great career—your employer will expect you to be on the job everyday, arriving on time, ready to go to work. We want you to attend all classes and arrive on time, so that you will develop the work habits that are essential to being successful on the job. Secondly, you need to be here everyday because that's the only way you will learn everything you need to be successful. Oh, yes, besides arriving on time, you also need to stay until the school day is over—just like you would on the job.

To do all homework and other assignments.

Homework is always an issue. When we designed our courses, we had to take into account what you needed to know to be successful. When we built those attributes into our curriculum, we discovered that it was impossible to give it all to you in the time allotted during the class periods. Therefore, we included some of it in the form of homework. It was either that or lengthen the program. We thought you would prefer to be able to finish the program faster, and we thought you would recognize the value of the homework when it is assigned.

To request assistance when necessary.

I told you earlier that we would offer you whatever help you needed, whenever you needed it, night or day, day or night. Well, there is a catch...you have to tell us when you need help. We aren't mind readers. So, when you need help, don't hesitate to ask for it and we'll be happy to provide it.

To have a positive attitude toward the college, other students, the faculty, and myself—and, I might add, toward your instructors, too.

There is a lot to be said about having a positive attitude. Have you ever known someone

who was always griping and complaining all the time? We all have. They aren't much fun to be around. Someone who is positive, on the other hand, is someone you would like to have as a friend. Good things seem to happen to good people, and good people have a positive attitude.

To take a professional approach to all assignments.

Remember, I said that we were preparing you to be successful on the job? Well, this is one of those elements. Workers who demonstrate a professional attitude and approach to their responsibilities are people who can be relied on, trusted, and respected. We want to help you build that habit into your presentation.

To look for solutions, not problems.

There's an old song that tells us to "look for the silver lining, whenever clouds appear in the blue." That's kind of what this means. Be on the lookout for solutions and you'll find them. But look for problems, and you're bound to find them, too. You have to decide which is most important to you and your goal.

To talk through conflicts (with mediation, if necessary).

It doesn't happen often, but when conflicts occur, we need to resolve them quickly, fairly, and appropriately. Sometimes mediation—meaning someone to help—is necessary. If so, we are here to help you.

To be a contributing member of the (college name) family.

This is a team effort—a commitment to help you reach your goals. By signing this, you are indicating that you understand each of these pledges, and you are willing to do your part, as a member of the team, to ensure that you reach your goal.

Tell me again what you want:

I want a good job and a great career!

If you agree, please put today's date, which is _____, and sign your name.

Now, I want you to pass those forward. We will make a copy of them, putting one in your file, and returning one to you to remind you that you

have entered into a partnership—a partnership that will help you succeed and graduate.

Do you have any questions at this point?

To present the next section of this orientation, I am pleased to present _____, our dean.

(Speaking to the dean) _____, I am pleased to present our latest class. They have reviewed our educational commitment and have agreed to its conditions. Would you please give them your best advice about how to succeed with our educational program of study?

Dean takes over and covers items contained in the Orientation Handbook. He/she then introduces each academic department head, by indicating how long they have been with the college, where they got what degrees, and anything else of interest. They then describe their courses of study and highlight items of particular importance, such as the certification exams.

When the academic department heads have completed their presentations, the director of place-

ment is introduced to explain the placement process and how these services apply to each student. He/she is presented by indicating qualifications and experience.

At the conclusion, the president/director invites everyone to the lounge/study area or a classroom to celebrate with refreshments. Music plays as the orientation session closes. The march from Star Wars is appropriate.

Props Needed:

1. Sound system
2. Recording of “Pomp and Circumstance”
3. Recording of “March from Star Wars”
4. Large, lined Post-it® Notes
5. Copies of the Certificate of Educational Commitment
6. Two copies of an attractive diploma with “Your Name Goes Here” printed on it
7. Gown and hood for each presenter

Certificate of Educational Commitment

This commitment is made by and between (College Name) and _____ and reflects an understanding of the contribution needed to ensure the successful achievement of your desired goal:

To graduate with the necessary skills to qualify for a good job and a great career

Our Commitment to You

- To work with you on an individual basis with respect for your needs and abilities.
- To facilitate your learning in an interesting and positive manner.
- To fairly and impartially grade and evaluate your performance.
- To rapidly report your grades on tests and projects.
- To reward your hard work and positive manner.
- To expect your best effort.
- To start classes on time with prepared faculty.
- To support any learning difficulties with additional help.

Agreed to on this date: _____

Signed _____
Director

Your Commitment to the College

- To attend all classes and arrive on time.
- To do all homework and other assignments.
- To request assistance when necessary.
- To have a positive attitude toward the college, other students, the faculty, and myself—and toward your instructors, too.
- To take a professional approach to all assignments.
- To look for solutions, not problems.
- To talk through conflicts (with mediation, if necessary).
- To be a contributing member of the (college name) family.

Agreed to on this date: _____

Signed _____
Student