

CIC GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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PURPOSE

Create an orientation process for online graduate students in the College of Information and Communication to welcome them to the program, reduce confusion, provide resources, and foster a sense of community.



PEOPLE INVOLVED

Project Sponsor: Dr. Lyda Fontes-McCartin

- Director, School of Information Science

Team Leader: Ellyn Domanico

- Graduate Student Services Manager, iSchool

Team Members:

- Sam Beals – Graduate Student Services Manager, SJMC
- Randy Dantrell Heath – iSchool Graduate Student Advisor
- Roger Fowler – iSchool Graduate Student Advisor

CIC Graduate Students

- Surveyed in discovery phase on their onboarding process to their program



PROJECT PATH

Discovery:

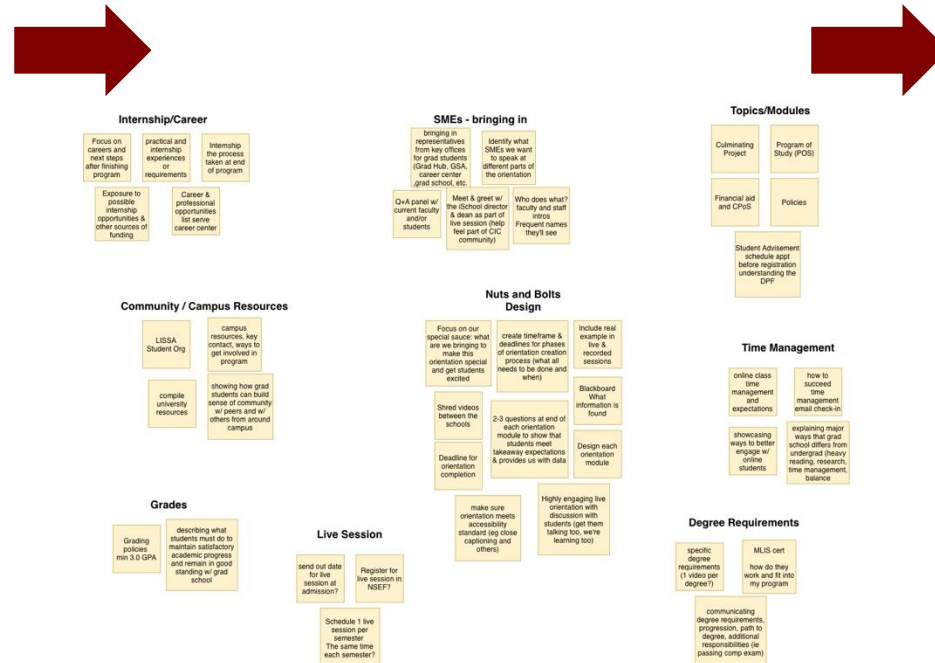
- Process map for current student onboarding
- Surveyed first-year CIC graduate students on their onboarding
 - 43 responses
- Identify areas of student concern and orientation topics from survey

Possibility:

- Analyzed survey data
- Brainstormed improvement ideas

Planning:

- Used AI to help suggest module topics based on survey data, intended goals, and our suggestions
 - Reviewed and made adjustments
- Create blackboard organization for orientation



KEY IMPROVEMENT 1

Created central orientation portal for all CIC graduate programs (iSchool & SJMC)

- Started as just a project for iSchool graduate students
- Graduate students across the college need a lot of the same information
- Brought in SJMC Graduate Student Services Manager



KEY IMPROVEMENT 2

Identified common areas that will be the same across schools to improve efficiency in orientation

- One central portal for all CIC graduate students to start in
- Created 7 modules for orientation, each with 3-4 videos per module
 - 23 videos total
 - 12 of the videos are exactly the same across degrees



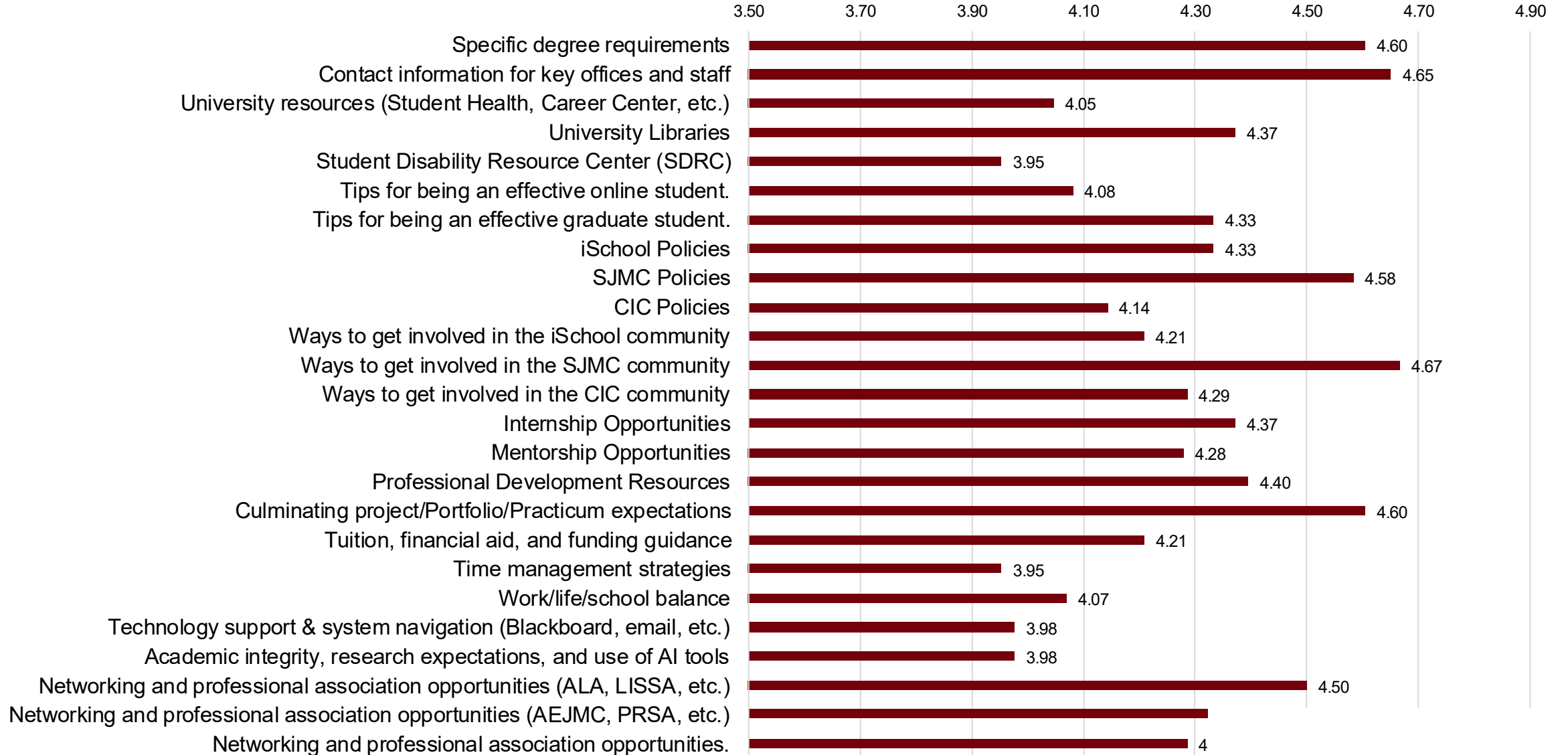
KEY IMPROVEMENT 3

Developed modules to line up with student identified areas of concern and student modality preferences

- Give students information that we need them to know AND that they want to know
- Based on survey data from students about what they wish they knew at the beginning now that they are in the program



Potential Orientation Topics



**Module 1:
Welcome**

School & Grad
Director Welcome

Graduate Student
Services Team Intro

Faculty Intros

Wrap Up

**Module 2:
Being a Successful
Graduate Student**

University Systems

Tips for being an
effective grad
student

Tips for being an
effective online
student

**Module 3:
Degree Requirements**

Specific Degree
Requirements
Include SL Internship

Culminating Project

Timeline to
Graduation

**Module 4:
Tuition & Financial
Considerations**

Tuition

Financial Aid

Scholarships &
Other Funding

Graduate
Assistantships

**Module 5:
Student Support,
Accessibility, & Well-
Being**

Intro

Grad Hub

Student
Disability Resource
Center

University Libraries

**Module 6:
Policies**

Graduate Student
Policies

University Policies

Taking a Semester
Off

**Module 7:
Professional
Associations & Building
a Community**

University
Resources

Professional
Associations

Internships

EXPECTED RESULTS

Qualitative

- Increased awareness of degree requirements
- Improved connectedness to degree program and courses
- Easily accessible resource for students to refer back to throughout their program

Quantitative & Qualitative

- Reduce early alerts from faculty
 - 31 Early Alerts submitted in 2025
- Increase time spent in advising appointments in rapport building and higher-level support



SUMMER 2026 LAUNCH

	Assigned to:	2/10-2/24	2/24-3/10	3/10-4/21	Not Yet Determined
Create PowerPoints	Ellyn	■			
Request director intro videos	Ellyn, Sam				
Request faculty intro videos	Roger				
Record Graduate Student Services intro videos	Full Team: Ellyn, Sam, Roger, Randy				
Create Blackboard organization	Ellyn		■		
PowerPoint review	Full Team: Ellyn, Sam, Roger, Randy				
Completer JotForm	Ellyn			■	
Create scripts for module videos	Ellyn				
Review scripts	Full Team: Ellyn, Sam, Roger, Randy				■
Record module videos	Ellyn				
Upload module videos					
Input reference links to modules					
Add student to organization					

REFLECTIONS

- Shifted from reacting to problems with quick fixes to following a structured, end-to-end improvement process
- Recognized the importance of thoroughly understanding the problem before implementing solutions
- Reduced rework by taking a more thoughtful, strategic approach to improvement



THANK YOU!

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South Carolina