



Order of The Golden Bear

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ESTABLISHED 1900

The Usual Place, September 26, 2017,

The New Golden Bear Orientation for New Students

The item for the good of the University was concerning the first implementation of the Golden Bear Orientation for new students, an 8 day program of large size including 6 student directors, 44 mentors 500 leaders, notably designed to create one orientation for all of the thousands of new students at once, the week before classes start.

Some Fellows mentioned positive experiences on the volunteer side as an orientation leader. They enjoyed the role they played for new students though they acknowledged the intense schedules and long hours worked for no pay. However several believed that rumors of widespread volunteer burnout and discontent were overblown in their degree.

Many felt that GBO was a great idea even just in concept as the previous CalSO made it financially difficult for many more distant students to travel to Berkeley in the middle of summer only to return home before the fall semester started. Additionally, Fellows saw that one united orientation should do wonders for class identity.

Some Fellows expressed concern that the Greek community was not brought into discussions regarding scheduling and logistics to a sufficient degree, citing that the seminar for education on safe partying and sexual assault didn't occur until Thursday, after days of thousands of freshmen trying to attend parties at fraternities. Others cited issues in holding volunteer leaders accountable, resulting in large groups of 30+ new students when there should have only been 15-20.

Fellows acknowledged the utility of late night scheduling to both provide activities for freshmen not interested in parties as well as serving as a deterrent from parties, though some worried that requiring leaders to also attend these late events was the cause of the very long hours and some Fellows believed this could be revised going forward.

Fellows with more administrative experience in the event lauded the staff and administration who led GBO as they had greater insight into the work and logistics that went into the complex event. However, Fellows also acknowledged that the signed contract for student mentors and volunteers was inaccurate in terms of the actual amount of work that was demanded, and they hoped that, with now having run the orientation, future contracts could be more accurate.

The tight turnaround time for housing, as move-in occurred very soon after the end of the last Summer Session, led to concerns by some Fellows, who wished for this issue to be examined at the administrative level going forward.

Fellows were impressed to hear that increased cohesion and sense of common identity has already been noticed among the new freshman class, suggesting this elusive goal has already been met with some success after only the first iteration of this orientation format.

Others acknowledged that the in-person safety and health-related orientations with engaging speakers were much more impactful than previous online modules used in years past. A very intense address about mental health was a great new addition, however some of the long hours imposed on the volunteers went against what was preached.

In looking forward, Fellows cited the orientation program used with success at California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo as a model for which the University should strive, especially as it is heavily volunteer based as well.

Fellows with more expertise reminded the room of how hard it is to fathom the complex logistics that went into the week, such as feeding 120 people every 10 minutes. Fellows expressed gratitude in the honesty of discussion and looked forward to the steady improvement that will be realized by this new orientation format in future years.

