

The Spring Orientation Checklist

From the first planning meeting to week six of the term, every step is built for a mid-year cohort.

Spring orientation isn't fall orientation, only smaller.

Your cohort is a mix of first-years, transfers, readmits, and international students. You're planning across winter break with a lean team. And your students arrive after friend groups have already formed. This checklist helps you plan for all three, from the first planning meeting to week six of the term.

This guide is divided into four phases

1 · Plan: shape the program around your cohort — p. 3

2 · Pre-arrival: keep admits on track over break — p. 5

3 · Orientation day: a program for every student type — p. 7

4 · The first six weeks: turn orientation into belonging — p. 9

How Guidebook helps · Next steps — pp. 8, 10

Make it yours

Every campus runs spring orientation differently. Cut what doesn't apply, add what's unique to your institution, and share it with your team.

How to read the markers

● marks a step specific to mid-year orientation. Every other step works for any orientation, so you can reuse this list in the fall.



Plan

Shape the program around who's actually arriving in January.

Know your cohort

- [ ] Pull your spring admit and deposit list by student type ●
- [ ] Compare this spring's cohort to the last two cycles ●
- [ ] Flag students who deferred from fall, so your messages acknowledge the wait ●
- [ ] Note which students will live on campus and which will commute
- [ ] List last year's most common student questions
- [ ] Share the cohort profile with advising, housing, financial aid, and international services

Set the program

- [ ] Write two or three goals that tie orientation to retention and belonging
- [ ] Choose your format: one day, two days, or in person plus online pre-orientation
- [ ] Set dates that land after registration and housing deadlines clear ●
- [ ] Decide which sessions everyone attends and which split by student type
- [ ] Cut fall sessions that don't fit a mid-year cohort ●
- [ ] Book rooms and dining space before January dates fill ●

Build your team

- [ ] Confirm staff availability over winter break and plan coverage ●
- [ ] Assign an owner and a content deadline for every campus partner session
- [ ] Set a weekly team check-in through December and January
- [ ] Recruit orientation leaders who started mid-year or transferred in ●
- [ ] Keep the master schedule and contact list in one shared place
- [ ] Brief front-line offices on dates and common questions

Your spring orientation timeline

Fill in your own dates and owners. The week ranges are a starting point; adjust them to your calendar.

When	Focus	Your date	Owner
10–8 weeks out	Know your cohort, set goals and format, book space		
7–5 weeks out	Recruit and train leaders, launch pre-arrival messages		
4–2 weeks out	Clear holds, confirm housing, send family information		
Final week	Final schedule, materials, check-in setup, team briefing		
Orientation day	Check-in, sessions by student type, winter plan		
Weeks 1–2	Mid-year welcome week, involvement fair		
Weeks 3–6	Check-ins, pulse surveys, debrief, hand-off		

Keep every date in one place

See how orientation teams run spring orientation with Guidebook.

Visit guidebook.com

Pre-arrival

Keep admitted students on track while campus goes quiet.

Keep admits on track

- [ ] Map every message a spring admit gets from deposit to day one, across all offices
- [ ] Schedule messages through winter break so students don't go quiet
- [ ] Watch for January melt signals: missed deadlines and unopened messages
- [ ] Cut duplicate and conflicting messages
- [ ] Name one point of contact for questions over break
- [ ] Follow up personally with students who haven't registered for orientation

Clear the path to day one

- [ ] Check every student for holds and send clear steps to clear them
- [ ] Finish transfer credit evaluations so students can register with confidence
- [ ] Send ID card, parking, and IT account steps before arrival
- [ ] Book advising appointments before spring classes fill
- [ ] Confirm housing assignments and move-in times for mid-year residents
- [ ] Confirm arrival plans and document deadlines with international students

Get families ready

- [ ] Send families a short guide to spring orientation and key dates
- [ ] List the offices families should call, with contact details
- [ ] Point families to one place for updates instead of several emails
- [ ] Explain what students handle themselves and where families can help
- [ ] Share move-in and parking details for January weather
- [ ] Invite families to a family session or online Q&A, if you offer one

Connect students early

- [ ] Introduce each student to their orientation leader before arrival
- [ ] Host an online meetup for spring admits over break
- [ ] Share a short list of clubs that welcome new members in spring
- [ ] Create small groups by student type or interest
- [ ] Connect new transfers with current transfer students
- [ ] Ask students what worries them most, and answer it at orientation

Orientation day

One program. Several kinds of students. Make it work for all of them.

Check-in and arrival

- [ ] Set up check-in so each student type gets the right materials
- [ ] Test check-in devices and Wi-Fi the day before
- [ ] Post signs from parking and transit stops to check-in ●
- [ ] Greet families separately and point them to their own schedule
- [ ] Track attendance in real time so you can follow up on no-shows

Run the program

- [ ] Open with a welcome that names mid-year students as part of the class ●
- [ ] Split sessions where needs differ, such as transfer credit and first-year advising
- [ ] Build in time for students to meet each other, not only staff
- [ ] Run a resource fair with the offices students need in week one
- [ ] Send schedule changes to students in real time
- [ ] Collect quick feedback before students leave

Plan for winter

- [ ] Route students indoors between sessions wherever you can ●
- [ ] Decide in advance how you'll tell students about a delay ●
- [ ] Share the weather plan with staff, leaders, and families ●
- [ ] Write a weather plan for delays, closures, and late arrivals ●
- [ ] Add coat storage and warm-up space to the venue plan ●

HOW GUIDEBOOK HELPS

Schedules for every student type. Give transfers, first-years, and families their own schedules in one orientation app, and send a push notification the moment a session moves or the weather changes the plan.

See how it works

Less confusion. More connection.

Spring orientation moves fast. Guidebook puts everything your students need in one branded orientation app, so your team answers fewer questions and students start the term ready.

Schedules by student type

Transfers, first-years, and families each see what applies to them.

Push notifications

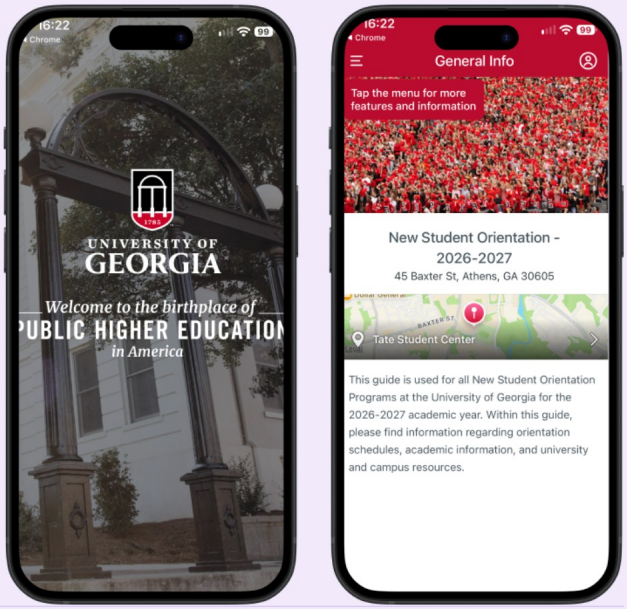
Reach every student the moment a room, time, or weather plan changes.

Check-in

See who arrived and follow up with who didn't.

In-app surveys

Collect feedback on orientation day and in the weeks after.



The first six weeks

Orientation ends. Belonging is just getting started.

Run a mid-year welcome week

- [ ] Plan a short welcome week built for spring arrivals ●
- [ ] Schedule events at times commuters and working students can attend
- [ ] Invite returning students to co-host, so new students meet the existing community ●
- [ ] Promote the spring involvement fair to new students first ●
- [ ] Remind students where to get help with classes, money, and housing

Build belonging

- [ ] Keep orientation small groups meeting through week three
- [ ] Ask orientation leaders to check in with each student in their group
- [ ] Create a space for transfer students to meet each other ●
- [ ] Pair new students with a peer mentor who started mid-year ●
- [ ] Invite spring students into clubs that are already running ●
- [ ] Share early alerts with advisors when a student stops engaging

Measure and hand off

- [ ] Send a short pulse survey in week two and week six
- [ ] Hold a team debrief while details are fresh
- [ ] Hand off the spring cohort's needs to the fall planning team ●
- [ ] Compare attendance and engagement by student type
- [ ] Record what to keep, cut, and change next spring

GO FURTHER

Ideas for a welcome week that keeps going after orientation ends.

Read the guide

Your spring orientation, in four moves

1. Know your cohort before you plan a single session.
2. Keep admits on track over winter break.
3. Run a program that works for every student type.
4. Keep building belonging through week six.

See how Guidebook can support your spring orientation.

One branded app for schedules, updates, and feedback, built by your team.

Book a demo

Plan your messages next

Read our communication framework for orientation teams.

Read the framework

Talk to us

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