



Parents & Supporters Orientation Webinar

Transcript

June 2023

Trent Barwick: All right welcome, everybody. Hello! Thank you all for being here. we're gonna drop right in. My name is Trent Barwick, and I use. He him pronouns. I'm the lead coordinator for orientation, transition, and engagement at the St. George campus. Here at the University of Toronto.

I represent the office of Student Life, which is a central office of the university.

We use Student Life as an umbrella term for a number of offices and services for students, which I'll tell you a bit more about later on. Today

I'm going to present some information today. Aim to help prepare you for September and for the rest of the year ahead.

Student Life programs and services are designed to support students in all areas of their life. And we continue to grow and adapt as the needs of the students change.

Needless to say, we've done a lot of adapting over the last few years for many. Their first year of T. Is about to begin. Student Life is here for you and your students. Every step of the way.

We want students to find their people and feel connected be physically and mentally well, it could great. And it's their exams and get a degree to help them score the career of their dreams. Student Life helps students do this and lots more every day.

before we begin. there are a few processes or a few things I want to go over today one. This is an online session. So if you can, if you're not asking your question, keep your microphones muted just to eliminate any noise you are looking at your cameras on, but it is not required or necessary.

And then I'll show you in a moment A. H. Chance to ask questions. If you do have questions we'll have time at the end. You can also submit them via a form, a Microsoft



form that we've created. We aren't able to answer questions on things like visas or immigration advice, just because that's not our area of expertise, but other questions. About the first year transition. We are happy to answer.

So, moving on to the agenda, and what today might look like.

So first, we're going to do a bit of a welcome to U. Of T. And introduce what the University of Toronto is all about. We'll talk about being an effective support. We'll talk about it supporting during the year.

We'll talk about preparing for September, and then, of course, time for your questions. If you do have a question, you can use this QR. Code on your screen. Now. you can just scan it with the camera on your phone. Or if that doesn't work, you can enter the URL code at the bottom and submit a question, and Emma, who you'll hear from shortly, will colleague this question at the end, and we'll get some answers going for you all.

Before I dive into things, I'm going to pass it over to Emma, who will speak a bit about her experience with her parents and supporters during her recent university years.

Emma Paulus: Hi, everyone. My name is Emma, and I am a current graduate student at OISE, pursuing a Master of Education in adult education and community development.

Prior to this, I also completed my undergrad at Ut in 2,022, where I earned a Bachelor of Arts majoring in the study of religion and mining in English, lit and Spanish.

I'd like to start off by extending a big congratulations to the students that you're supporting as they make their way into the University of Toronto. We're so excited to have them, and I can't wait to see where they end up.

Although it's been a few years since I was in their shoes. I still clearly remember what it felt like when I was preparing to start my first year at you. It feels like. It was just yesterday when I was showing up to my colleges welcome day in June of 2018, with my mom.

So we both had the chance to start learning about the ways that things work at U of T and the resources available to me.

I recall the nerves mixed with excitement, the hundreds of burning questions about all things university, and the uncertainty that was of what was to come in September.



I also remember how nervous and excited. My parents were for me like yourselves. My parents were committed to supporting me in my university journey as their eldest child. However, I was the first of their kids to go to university, and like me, they had lots of questions, and if this sounds familiar, you're already on the right track when it comes to providing support for our incoming class of students, because you're here wearing the university and asking questions.

Now that I've successfully transitioned in and out of the university. I'd like to reassure you that there are so many support systems available at U. Of T. For students as they navigate this time of change.

We really do care about our students and want them to not only succeed academically, but also to provide in all aspects of their lives as they navigate their first year, and throughout their entire undergrad things may come up that that they need extra support on if they or you are unsure where to start or who can help. I really recommend starting with their divisions, registrar, or dean's offer.

The people who work in these offices are there to help and have a wealth of knowledge about the resources available to students. They're a great starting point to get connected with the right resources.

The other piece of advice I have, which I know from my own experience, is to encourage your student to get involved in some capacity on campus. While this is an academic institution. It also has many opportunities for students to get involved in different clubs, programs, and activities.

I made some of my closest friends and best memories through my extracurricular involvement at my college.

These opportunities were so important to me as I figured out who I was, what I enjoyed and what I wanted to do after I finished school. Then, when I ran into challenges, whether they were academic, social, or personal, I had friends that I could turn to, and I had made connections with Staff that could direct me to appropriate resources.

The last thing I want to mention before I pass it back to Trent is to just reiterate how important your support is and how I appreciate it. It will be to your students.

So thank you for being here in the session, and for taking time to learn how you can best support them on their dream. With that I'll pass it back to.



Trent Barwick: all right. thank you, Emma. It's always great to hear from the student perspective or the recent student perspective. And to hear just how important this relationship can be.

So we're gonna dive into some information on what you can expect this fall. So first, we're going to talk about the University of Toronto itself. So first and foremost welcome. Welcome to the University of Toronto. We are so excited to welcome your students here this year for folks who aren't familiar with the University. We're located right in downtown Toronto.

The campus is really integrated within the city and the environment around it. It's a really special place, and if possible, I do encourage you to visit and check out the historic campus for yourself.

As of the fall 2020, the University of Toronto offered 700 different undergraduate programs in humanity, social science, life, science, physical and mathematical science, commerce, management, computer science, engineering, kinesiology, and physical education, music and architecture. And yes, I have written all of those down right here. so I did not forget one. I've not memorized those yet.

We really do have a little bit of everything, however, which I I think, makes the University of Toronto really unique and very cool. With such a large school in campus we're always trying to find ways to make students feel a sense of connection and community. And one way that we do this is the college system.

All students in the faculty of arts and science at the St. George campus are affiliated with one of 7 colleges.

So so far in your journey as your students enter, you've probably heard about these colleges quite a bit.

The 7 undergraduate colleges that exist within the college system are Trinity College, Victoria College, St. Michael's College, University College, Woodworth College, New College, and in his college.

These undergraduate colleges have really really deep roots in the university in college system itself actually dates back to the earliest days of the University back when they are their own distinctive units. We're coming together to form the University of Toronto.



A lot of folks I work with at the colleges like to mention how they actually are older than the University of Toronto itself.

We did at the University of Toronto want to maintain this college system because it creates a sense of community within a larger community which is become part of the identity of the University of Toronto.

The way you can think about the colleges is that they're really a home base for students on campus. So a student's college, providing with the advantages of a closer knit community, also getting the benefits of this large large institution.

It also provides you, with all of their support services, that they may need access to such as academic advising, programming through their dean's office, a place to call home on campus. If they're living in residence, for example, or Student Life opportunities focus specifically to their college.

First, your students who are taking kinesiology and physical education, engineering, architecture, or music. They belong to what we call a professional faculty.

So similar to a college students who are in those faculties receive support directly from their faculty with the same services I mentioned within the colleges.

So it also provides them with this smaller community that they can access and identify with. This is something that I feel you if he does really, really well. And it's something students really embrace and feel pride in this college and faculty bride starts early during orientation week, which we'll get into in a little bit.

One of the benefits of being a U of T student is that, in addition to being supported by their college or faculty, students have access to all of our central offices, services, and their supports on campus as well.

So Student Life, which I mentioned at the beginning is an umbrella term that we use for all of these sexualized services and supports on canvas.

So it's a comprehensive list. Here. You have all the offices that fall under that umbrella of Student Life. We'll talk a bit about some of these as we go forward, as well as our students can connect with them and engage in the programs and events and services that they offer.



One thing I want to highlight is the Student Life has a really comprehensive social media presence.

You can access information about events, services, and things that are happening on campus by following our social media channels. I would really recommend following these accounts. If you want to get regular updates about what's happening on campus what students might be interested in or just become part of the community.

You can learn more about things that are happening in peak periods throughout the year. The account really gives you a sense of the Student Lifecycle as well as our calendar. We are also working on a newsletter for parents and supporters. We hope to launch this summer, which is another way that you can stay connected.

So, first and foremost, I want to acknowledge that by being here attending this orientation session you're already taking action to be an effective support for your students, which is amazing.

I'm hoping to give you a bit of insight, but the things that we regularly hear from the students that we work with. As well speak to some of my own experiences as a student and a staff member in ways that might be helpful for you.

Some folks may have experienced with other may have experience. I'm sorry with other children or family members going to university for some. This may be the very first person that you're supporting through this experience.

Regardless, I'm hoping that I can give some insight that might be helpful as you enter into this period of transition and change.

Entering the first year of university is one of the most significant transitions and challenges that your student will face. It represents a very key point in their life.

This transition brings a lot of change, growth, and development, and is formative in many ways. It presents with the freedom they may not have experienced before, and responsibilities that now fall entirely onto them.

So I imagine right now, as we're moving toward the beginning of September. There's probably a lot of excitement, maybe a little bit of nerves, and probably definitely a lot of questions.



I want to chat a bit about what you can expect going into this academic year, and some ways that you can manage some of the feelings that are happening, and support your student through this time.

One of the things that I want to acknowledge first and foremost is that your role as a supporter is going to change one of the most difficult habits for parents and supporters to break is interceding on their student's behalf.

You're at high school. Parents and supporters are kept informed.

5 notices of important events and deadlines. phone calls regarding things like attendance parent teacher interviews. And of course, report cards.

It's completely different at university.

While your interest in your students. Progress is definitely encouraged. And that's a good thing you don't have this automatic access to the student records anymore. It's university policy. And in fact, it's actually the law that the university cannot release details about a student to anyone, even parents within the students express written consent.

If there are concerns regarding performance rules or deadlines. For example, it's up to the student to address them directly. In most cases that's done through the office of the registrar which employs the staff of experienced and supportive, academic and financial advisors who are there to assist your student.

It's important to know that if there's a concern for your student safety at any point you can reach out to resident staff or campus, security or campus safety. They have processes in place to support you and help with this.

The next thing to think about is how the transition is different for everyone.

Many first year students are dismayed when they get their first few assignments back after marking the great theatre. He can be low, sometimes much lower than they've ever had before.

This is common, even straight. A high school students may experience difficulties because of the different approach to studying that's required from a university level



course. It can be discouraging, but as they adapt and better understand the caliber of. We're required. The marks usually do start to rise.

Sometimes students discover that they've enrolled in a program that they just aren't suited for or for which they just lost interest.

For example, a student who's always wanted to be a doctor, they have actually quite a bit of difficulty in life sciences. They may discover a passion for, and a success in, something like philosophy, or English literature or business.

It can be confusing for parents and students.

So don't be surprised if your student fine tunes their program study or explores other areas.

It's quite common, in fact, more than half of university students switch or adjust programs at some point, and you have to allow students to explore and assemble a course of study that builds upon and rewards their specific strengths.

Their best chance at succeeding is to have a passion and a drive for what they're studying

Next, and this is a big one. Is that communication is key. I recommend that you establish communication guidelines with your students focused on how regularly you want to stay in touch and then discuss it with your students before September. It's important to note that as students become better adapted to campus and their studies, they may communicate with you less.

At the same time. Some students who are living away from home. They experience a transition period where they start feeling homesick and they contact you more often at the beginning of the year.

This is normal. And it's important to be supportive. At this time. You may get an email or a phone call from a student that just doesn't sound right. They may sound panicked or angry, or homesick.

This could be the result of many things, including a build up of pressure which can come at any time, but we particularly see it in first, your students in October and November.



This is the first time through midterms, and it can be taxing because there is no comparison. In most secondary schools. When this happens, be patient, often just listening is enough.

And then it, you feel stressed on their behalf, but it can work wonders, very frustrated or stressed out, student. But with all of this said, if you're worried that something is really wrong, trust your instincts instead of time to follow up with your student and offer supports in ways that you are able.

So speaking of that, while you may want to solve all of the problems for your students. It is also important to support their independence and their problem. Solving one of the hallmarks of the university experience is the development of greater independence is a natural and necessary stage of becoming an adult. That's another reason why students need to interact in the university community on their own.

For many supporters. It can be challenging, either because it's difficult for them to visualize their children as being adults, or in some instances, because the cultures they grew up in, had a strong tradition of parental involvement.

Nevertheless, encouraging your student to become more independent during their university experience will allow them to succeed here as well as after they graduated.

This can be a gradual process and goes together with communication. But it's a very important one.

Encourage your student to access resources and supports on campus students have dedicated supports through the registrar's office and dean's office within their college and faculties.

They're also able to access all of the central Student Life services.

Many of the services are accessible. Your online booking via email, or the CLNx website which you use to register for this session your students should have some familiarity with Student Life, has a family support. His handbook that outlines key concerns for every month of the academic year and resources that can help. We encourage you to access the Handbook and refer to the resources in a supportive way.

It's important for students to know that they can ask for help, and that they do not have to be perfect.



Finally, it is so so important to be understanding. We often hear from students that they're worried about disappointing their parents and family. This can be for several reasons, but it's often because the student has put a lot of pressure on themselves to be successful right away.

It's important for your student to know that you are there to support them, and you want them to have a good experience. Education is a process that happens both inside and outside of the classroom.

Many of the most important lessons we learn are through our own personal experiences.

So something on the forefront of many supporters. Mind is safety understandably so, as we want to know, our students are safe, comfortable, and thriving overall. I always recommend that folks familiarize themselves with campus.

We have an excellent interactive map that can help you play around or sorry that you cannot play around with to learn some of the different buildings and areas on campus and places that students might want to visit. They can be found on the link in the chat and at the link at the bottom of this slide.

I encourage you to check it out and get to know what campus looks like. See where your students are living relative to where their classes are, and even go through with them. Learn together this summer. It's a great chance to get to know the campus.

In addition, the St. George campus has a wonderful campus safety app with lots of information about how to get access to different safety services or safety programs. For example, there's a really excellent program called Travel Safer, where, if a student is studying late on campus, taking a later class participating in a sport, whatever it is, they can actually register that someone walk them back to residents or walk them to the near subway station anywhere on campus.

The app is also available for parents and supporters to download.

So if you want to see some of the resources that are there, or just get a better understanding of campus safety at the University of Toronto. I encourage you to download this app. If you go to the app store and look up, you of T. Campus safety This is what will come up. It's this app here. and I highly recommend you check it out



All right. So I know we're all very focused on September, because it's coming up quickly, even though it's only June.

It is September before we know it. there's lots happening right now that we're trying to get prepared for. However, it is important to remember that your student will need support throughout the year. Beyond that initial September push.

It will look different month to month, depending on what's going on in their schedule. How busy they are, how much academic work they have and other things that they're participating in.

So here are some things that I want you to keep in mind as one of their biggest supporters.

First encourage your student to get involved in campus life.

This is especially important for commuting students.

Some of the most important learning experiences students have are outside of the classroom. Students often choose not to seek out involvement opportunities because they're worried about it. Impacting their academics. However, research shows the students who successfully engaged in community outside of the classroom are actually more successful.

Sorry I messed up a little bit. Basically, the idea is suited to engage outside the classroom, find success inside the classroom. That's what I was getting at. It is important to encourage balance. Participating in one club or campus group. It'd be a great way to make friends and find community in first year

U of T has over 800 clubs. There will be something to support their interests. I know for me personally most of the friends I still have to. This day came from getting involved, and I was in the first year.

It seemed daunting at first, because I knew I didn't want to roll off my academics or mess up my school work. However, it actually ended up helping me quite a bit.

I have people I could study with ask questions to, and who supported the care for you during the stressful times, decay. Everyone has different levels with which they can get involved. But I encourage all students to take some time to find their fit.



Talk with your students about what it means to take on new responsibilities, and check in and encourage them to get support when they hit bumps in the road. It's important to encourage them to access resources proactively.

It could always be helpful to me with an academic advisor to discuss how your student is progressing or how our student is progressing. It's important also for students to take care of the physical and mental wellness

You see, offers a number of programs to support well, being, including sport and recreation activities, Yoga and mindfulness, nutrition, resourcing and workshops as well as health services.

Helping your student navigate a large university by referring them to a resource, is one of the best ways you can support them

By acting as a referral source. You can demonstrate that you are interested in your students life at the University, and at the same time you empower your student to solve their own problems.

You don't have to be an expert of the campus or the university, and we do have resources such as the Family and Friends Handbook, the parent support our website, which will drop in the chat as well.

But one thing to remember is that your student will change university, and the experiences associated with it can affect and create changes. It's natural, it's inevitable, and it can be great and inspiring.

You can't stop this change, and you may not totally get it or understand it, but it is within your power and to your students advantage who accept it. Growth and learning is part of this experience. The empathetic and try to learn about their experience and engage with them about this.

I want to talk a little bit about preparing for September, so it's coming quickly. And there are a few things I want you and your students to keep in mind.

So most of your students have hopefully probably activated their U of T email and use what's what we call their UTORid or their JOINid if they got activated it. Yet we want to make sure that they're taking the opportunity to get familiar with some of these common systems, such as acorn. And you email.



Trent Barwick: it's spell, A/C or N is the web platform. They're going to use throughout their undergraduate career to manage things like courses, financial records, information, and then later, their transcripts and their grades. everything that they need when it comes to student systems, exists on acorn for them.

Trent Barwick: You email is something they should be checking regularly. Even at this interval of the summer the University will communicate with them entirely through the university email. So as soon as they transfer from

Trent Barwick: the joint id to their UTORid whatever email they were using before. Whether it's a high school email or a Gmail the university will now exclusively communicate through their U Oft email address.

So this is important to check, because this includes administrative offices. Their professors. really, anything happening on a campus go through their U of T-mail.

So the first week of school is for almost all students, regardless of the institution. It's usually orientation. That's how most institutions, both schools, most faculties, keep things off.

And in my very unbiased opinion. It is one of the best weeks of the entire university career, and it's such an amazing way to start things off.

We want to make sure that your students register for orientation. If they have not already.

We can share a lot of great orientation information with you in the Q. A But it's important to note that we find students are most successful when they participate in orientation activities.

It correlates directly to their likelihood of success through undergrad.

This is because in orientation they're learning lots of great skills. They're connecting with different offices, resources, faculty members and staff will be there to support them through their entire university career.

Perhaps, most importantly, this is also where they're going to make friends that may last a lifetime when it comes to registering some registration aren't open yet. Some may just be opening. It usually happens early July. The students should check their college or



faculty websites. They will likely get emails as well. But they just Google, you know, Victoria college orientation. Typically that helps you find the link you need. And if you have questions, you can always reach out to me at a later date.

So it is important to make a financial plan and have some conversations that expenses help your students understand them.

I know there's a different spectrum of support for students when it comes to finances. I personally finance the majority of my education. So my experience was working part time through undergrad, using my savings to pay for tuition along with forms of financial aid which is common for quite a few students.

So as such I was very involved in the management of my own finances, but that looks different for every student.

For some students you get more family support. It's still important to have the conversations of what can they expect? What this might look like?

It's good to start having those conversations now, so they're ready going into the year, and they aren't surprised when they have to manage things themselves.

We also encourage you to talk to your student about what they want to learn. One of the great things about your first year U of T is that there is a lot of flexibility to take different types of classes that may be of interest.

Students can take a breadth of things in different areas, especially students who are in the faculty of arts and sciences. There's lots of opportunity to change your courses. At the beginning of the year. After my first year I realized I wasn't fully happy in my program. So I met with an academic advisor.

They showed me so many different paths I could take, and I'm really glad that I investigated it. I think the important thing to note here is that change can be good. and it's important to engage with things that you feel passionate about.

Talk to your students, about things that might be interesting to them. Go through the U Oft program page to see what kind of classes are available to first-year students. There are so many things that we offer, but you probably can't even imagine our classes.



There are classes like me, history, music, the poetry of physics. There are so many interesting and cool things the students can take to round out their experience and help them engage with things they're passionate about.

We also want to make sure you're reviewing important dates and deadlines, so that you're familiar with them as well as your student.

Have a conversation with your student before they arrive, so they can. What these dates are, and you can look over the timetable and calendar together. So they have some familiarity with it, and that you're on the same page. This includes things like core selection fee deadlines, university closures, and of course exams

One of the biggest ones, and one of the more exciting ones is we want you to get excited. This is a wonderful time, and although there's lots of transition and change, there is also a ton to feel great about.

This is a wonderful experience. Your students are joining a new community, and we hope that it will provide them with the opportunity to really learn and grow.

You'll hear amazing stories, triumphs, and you get to hear all about these new friends and the and things that they're doing. It is something you should be excited about and embracing as the journey continues.

And finally, I want to note that we do have a summer calendar and checklist

Folks may have seen this already. The summer calendar and checklist provides a breakdown a month by month of things they should be thinking about looking at or investigating into.

It also includes things that they can do in advance of arriving in September.

So if this is something you haven't seen yet, we strongly encourage you to visit the summer checklist web page. This can really help you get started and prepare for the next couple of months.

So that's it for my formal presentation. if you are interested in reaching out. If you want to connect after the fact, you can find that email there @utoronto.ca, if you have a question that you want to submit for Emma and I. Today you can use this QR code or



that URL the top. And we finally do encourage you to check out our social media. Accounts follow at U of the student live to say up to date on what is happening.

Otherwise, I'm gonna stop the recording now, because when we get to questions I'll leave that out of the presentation. But thank you all for listening, and, Emma, let me know when we have some questions in the chat. Thank you. for those joining us in the future on the recording. Thank you for joining us.