

The History of the NODA Journal

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The inaugural edition of the NODA Journal (now *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition*) carried the following message from then-President Robert W. Walters:

We anticipate that the scholarly content of the Journal will compliment the existing NODA publications (i.e., *The Handbook for Orientation Directors*, the *Orientation Review*, and the *NODA Data Bank*) as well as further meet the needs of our ever-expanding profession and our responsibilities in higher education. (1982, p. 2)

Twenty-five years later, NODA can look back with pride on the history and development of the Journal and its significance to the profession. The Journal's history and content are the subjects of this article.

The Early Years

NODA's leadership in the early 1980s showed courage and foresight in launching a scholarly publication among such well-established journals as the *Journal of College Student Personnel* and the *Journal of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors*. Under the editorship of Victor S. Zarzycki of the Philadelphia College of Art, the NODA Journal was set forth as ...the official journal of the National Orientation Directors Association. The Journal contains articles written for the higher education professional who is responsible for the development, implementation, and assessment of programs directed toward the orientation of students to the college/university environment. (1982, p. 1)

The earliest NODA Journals were brief (24-30 pages) and contained full-length manuscripts, occasional book reviews and abstracts, "In The Field" articles, and, in one issue, a reprint of the Council on the Advancement of Standards (CAS): *Orientation Standards and Interpretive Guidelines* (Vol. 3, No. 1, 1984). Authors included faculty members, orientation directors, and other student affairs administrators from housing, admissions, and student activities. The selection process for articles at that time was not documented, but one might surmise that in the early years, many submissions were readily accepted for publication in an effort to quickly produce a journal. Several of the articles were of high quality and linked recognized student development or management theories to orientation practice. (A sample of articles from early editions is included in this anniversary issue.)

The Journal had a tentative start but soon met with obstacles that challenged

its survival. Because of a lack of quality submissions and budget limitations, the NODA Journal was not published regularly in the early years, and in 1986, the decision was made to discontinue the publication in favor of pursuing other organizational priorities.

Reinstatement of the Journal

The NODA Journal lay dormant until the mid-1990s when a proposal to reinstate the publication came to the Board of Directors in October 1995 and March 1996 from Bonita Jacobs, then Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Development at Western Carolina University, and Dan Robb, NODA Vice President. This well developed document laid out a timeline, budget, and staff of associate editors, with Jacobs—a well-respected, prolific author—identified for the role of primary editor.

In part, the proposal read, “It is proposed that the Board of Directors determine the feasibility and practicality of reinstating a journal to be published semi-annually, and that the NODA president appoint an editor and an editorial board” (Jacobs & Robb, 1995). The editorial board would determine the specifics of a journal such as

- Number of articles needed for each issue
- Whether to include items such as conference proceedings
- Title of the journal
- Ways to encourage submissions
- Printing bids
- Copy and University Microfilms’ Series submissions.

Jacobs and Robb were clear in their proposal that reestablishment of the Journal would require a commitment of both time and money in order to serve the scholarly interests of NODA’s membership. Perhaps thinking back to the earlier history of the Journal, they wisely anticipated that the editorial board would need to initiate submissions from sources such as presenters at highly-rated conference sessions, graduate students, faculty, and invited authors. They also suggested that the editors consider topical issues, although these would be dependent upon publicity, long-range planning, and creativity (Jacobs & Robb, 1995).

With Board approval secured for the publication, Jacobs convened a national group of associate editors which began to meet regularly in person at annual conferences, the first being in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1996. Frequent e-mail contact occurred between conferences. The new editorial board helped to determine the name of the journal, approved publication guidelines, and discussed long-range goals and ways to increase submissions. The editorial board began a tradition of presenting a concurrent session at each annual meeting to stimulate ideas for the Journal and motivate potential writers. Many regional NODA conferences have featured similar sessions. With careful cultivation from Jacobs, *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* has published continuously twice a

year since 1997. In 2001, Michael T. Miller, then of San Jose State University, assumed the role of editor.

Today's Journal

The Journal of College Orientation and Transition looks quite different from its predecessor of 25 years ago. Now typically 75 to 100 pages in length, it is three or four times the size of the earliest volumes and contains a more sophisticated mix of articles—from full-length research manuscripts to practical “Campus Notes” submissions to book reviews to “Perspectives” pieces which convey an opinion or philosophical point of view relevant to the field of orientation and transition. While the focus remains primarily on undergraduate students, articles have been published on graduate and professional school transitions and on transitions into as well as out of college. The JCOT remains a publishing venue for first-time authors as well as for seasoned writers, and a high percentage of articles are written by members of underrepresented groups.

Currently edited at Northern Illinois University, the Journal requires the attention of its current editor, Denise L. Rode, and a managing editor, Sheena C. Williams, as well as a dedicated editorial board. It is fair to say that NODA's journal is in its “adolescent” stage of development—no longer a new publication but still establishing itself among its peers in higher education. As we look toward the future, there is a continuing need for high-quality submissions in all categories, especially in cutting-edge research on the orientation and transition of new students from increasingly diverse backgrounds.

In its somewhat turbulent existence, *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* has given a scholarly voice to NODA and has provided a vehicle for the professional development of its members—graduate students, new professionals, faculty members, and experienced veterans seeking pathways to stay connected with the field and with this special association.

Content Analysis of *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition*

1982-Present

A review of material in *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* shows that approximately 163 articles have been published in 24 documentable issues. These articles were assigned to the following categories, with some articles falling into more than one: (a) Program Administration, (b) Program Formats (overall structure of programs), (c) Program Components (specific units within an overall program), (d) Orientation Staffing, (e) Special Populations, (f) Family Orientation/Transition, (g) Extended Orientation Activities (i.e., first-year experience courses, mentoring), (h) Student Characteristics, (i) Professional Development, (j) Technology, and (k) Trends and Issues.

By far the most common topic for articles was Special Populations, with 34 main articles and five book reviews in the category, representing 21% of the total number of articles. Populations treated in the articles included commuter students, students' siblings, students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Native American students, transfer students, returning adult students, students undecided about their major, international students, graduate students, honors students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities.

Thirty-two articles (19.6% of the total) could not be placed into discrete categories and fell into the "Miscellaneous" grouping. Articles in this category centered on such far-ranging issues as financial aid, governance in higher education, retention, and student work issues.

Combining the categories of Program Formats and Program Components yielded a total of 30 articles (18.4%). Here, authors treated a variety of topics, from weekend orientation programs to transitional programs for multi-ethnic first-year students to wilderness adventure options to orientation formats on large research campuses and at urban institutions.

Articles on program administration accounted for the next largest category, with 21 standard articles and six book reviews (12.9% of the total). These articles focused on diverse topics such as collaboration between orientation and other campus units, program evaluation and benchmarking, the use of CAS Standards, budget and financial management, customer service, and the FISH! Philosophy.

The intriguing category of Trends and Issues included an array of subjects, ranging from dating violence to studying abroad to faculty involvement in orientation programming. These articles made up 11.7% (N=19) of all published articles.

The area of Extended Orientation Programs was the focus of nearly 10% (N=16) of articles published in the Journal. While most of these articles were written on extended orientation courses, some dealt with mentoring, common reading experiences, and Supplemental Instruction. Articles on professional development (i.e., leadership, writing for publication, management) represented 8.5% (N=14) of material published.

The use of technology in orientation was a small (N=10; 6.1%) portion of the Journal's fare in this study. However, technology-related articles are relatively new in the publication, and this category is expected to grow in future years.

Receiving less attention in the Journal's literature were the topics of staffing (student and professional) and family orientation/transition. These categories represented only 4.3% and 3.0% of the total number of articles. While the researcher found this to be a surprisingly small amount, it may be that these topics are treated in other ways, such as conference presentations, workshops, and listserv exchanges.

The Journal's Book Review section was striking in the types of material authors selected to read and review. Overwhelmingly, works reviewed were of the "how to succeed in college" variety. Titles included *Supercharge Your Study Skills*, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, and *The Educated Student: Getting the Most Out of Your College Years*. Other authors provided a glimpse into student characteristics in reviewing such works as *When Hope and Fear Collide: A Portrait of*

Today's College Student, Serving the Millennial Generation: New Directions for Student Services, and *The College Transfer Student in America: The Forgotten Student*.

Were there significant differences in the nature of articles published in the early years of the Journal compared with more recent issues? This researcher found it hard to tell, as the earliest issues were concise and contained only four to six articles, many of them quite brief. However, from a cursory reading, article topics did not seem to differ significantly. Then, as now, readers were interested in practical ideas and ways to enhance their programs and services for students in transition and their families, along with theory and research that influence our work as professionals in higher education. We suspect that will continue to be the case as the Journal and NODA enter their next phase of development.

JCOT Editors

Denise L. Rode, Northern Illinois University, 2005-present

Michael T. Miller, University of Arkansas, 2001-2005

Bonita Jacobs, University of North Texas, 1997-2001

Joseph T. Nairn, Rochester Institute of Technology, 1984-1986

Victor S. Zarzycki, Philadelphia College of Art, 1982-1984

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Zarzycki, V. S. (1982). Introduction. *NODA Journal*, 1(1), 1.