Georgia State University

ADVANTAGE®
DESIGN GROUP

Perspective

a discussion with

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Georgia State University is a large, public research institution with a campus in downtown Atlanta providing baccalaureate and graduate degrees and five campuses providing associate degrees through Perimeter College. Over 50K students attend Georgia State and the university welcomes over 7500 students and their families to nearly 50 in-person orientation sessions each summer across six locations.

Uniquely, attending Georgia State can "feel like" a traditional, residential four-year school and a community college, depending on which location students call home. Academic programs serve traditional students, online learners, and dually enrolled students, adding more attributes to an already diverse student population.

Administrators identified two needs for new student orientation: enhance in-person programs across six campuses to support enrollment and provide an experience that balance in-person events and virtual components. In other words, leverage high tech and keep it high touch.

To move orientation content to a digital environment, improve accessibility, and better serve exceedingly diverse audiences, Georgia State created a comprehensive strategy to provide onboarding support during the student journey from admission to orientation to ultimately, enrollment. Powered by Advantage Design Group®, the new orientation platform, called "Start @ State," enables a seamless and personalized onboarding experience for all members of the Panther Family, including faculty and staff.

Real-Life Experience

This Case Study discusses the goals, strategies, tactics, outcomes, and future benefits of using Advantage Orientation® as a comprehensive and customized online orientation solution. When positioned within the onboarding journey, participants engage in interactive and media-rich content to prepare for a successful new student or new hire transition.

Situation & Goals

"We wanted to

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Both Destiny and Ben started their new student orientation roles at Georgia State at about the same time. "We inherited an existing contract with Advantage Design Group® from our predecessor," Destiny explained. "We're fortunate, because I would've chosen this solution because it is user friendly, easy to edit and works with other technologies, like our student information systems."

According to Destiny, they had previously ventured into the online orientation space with three, separate, home-grown orientation experiences: a pre-orientation for freshmen, a separate program for transfers, and yet another, separate program for dual enrollment students. Each was managed in separate offices, making continuity and message consistency a challenge. With Advantage Orientation®, "we have a more centralized way to support students through the onboarding journey because it is easy to know the exact information being delivered to each student type," Destiny said.

"We wanted to make sure we could provide a seamless onboarding experience," Ben recalled. "And, for me and my team, it was important the experience also be holistic to fulfill the needs of each program we support - transfer students, transition students, and dual enrollment students, for example." According to Ben, the system needed to address practical, organizational needs, too. Given that his five-person staff serves approximately 10K students annually across six campuses, they needed a way to scale operations to automatically release registration holds and easily update content.

Online Orientation Goals
- Provide Seamless Onboarding Experience
- Personalize to Student Groups
- Automate Processes
- Easily Manage Content On Demand

"Because we had the contract in place, my leadership challenged me to find the best ways to make the most of the system," Ben said. After an evaluation, it was evident to Ben Advantage Orientation® had the capabilities and offered the design aesthetic needed to meet each requirement.

It was time to develop a plan.

Implementing the Plan

"We started with four Member Groups. We're now at 11 and will likely be creating three or four more."

Personalization

Georgia State's initial production agreement included a feature exclusive to Advantage Orientation® called "Member Groups." This function enables the system to securely retrieve designated student data, including admission types. Admission types are used to define each Member Group, so participants engage in content relevant specifically to them. Staff administrators can be assigned to each Member Group to manage content. This method of designation, along with unlimited training and support, empowers staff to make edits on demand without accidentally changing content for other groups.

Initially, Ben's team anticipated needing four to five Member Groups to orient the student populations traditionally served by the new student orientation office. They soon discovered they needed more.
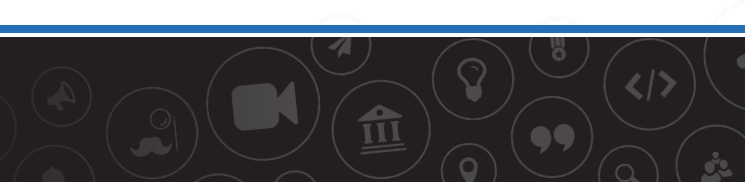
Campus Collaboration

As department leaders across campus learned of the new online orientation project being developed, they approached Ben and Destiny to explore how they might be included. Given the platform's Member Group capabilities, it was easy to add Georgia State's Graduate School and Human Resources department to share the platform. Advantage Design Group's programmers readied the system and staff received training. Today, graduate students and new employees participate in their own, unique online orientation from the same platform and staff in each department maintain the content.

"It was great how we approached this, from the community perspective. We had colleagues in IT, in areas of Student Success across the university help make this happen," Ben said. Their production scope with Advantage Design Group® included copy and script writing services, which supported Ben and his team as they collaborated with campus partners to confirm content met everyone's expectations. According to Ben, it's been a "win-win" for everyone.

"We started with four Member Groups. We're now at 11 and will likely be creating three or four more," Ben said. The number of Member Groups that can be assigned to a single platform is unlimited. To date, Georgia State provides unique orientation content to the groups listed here.

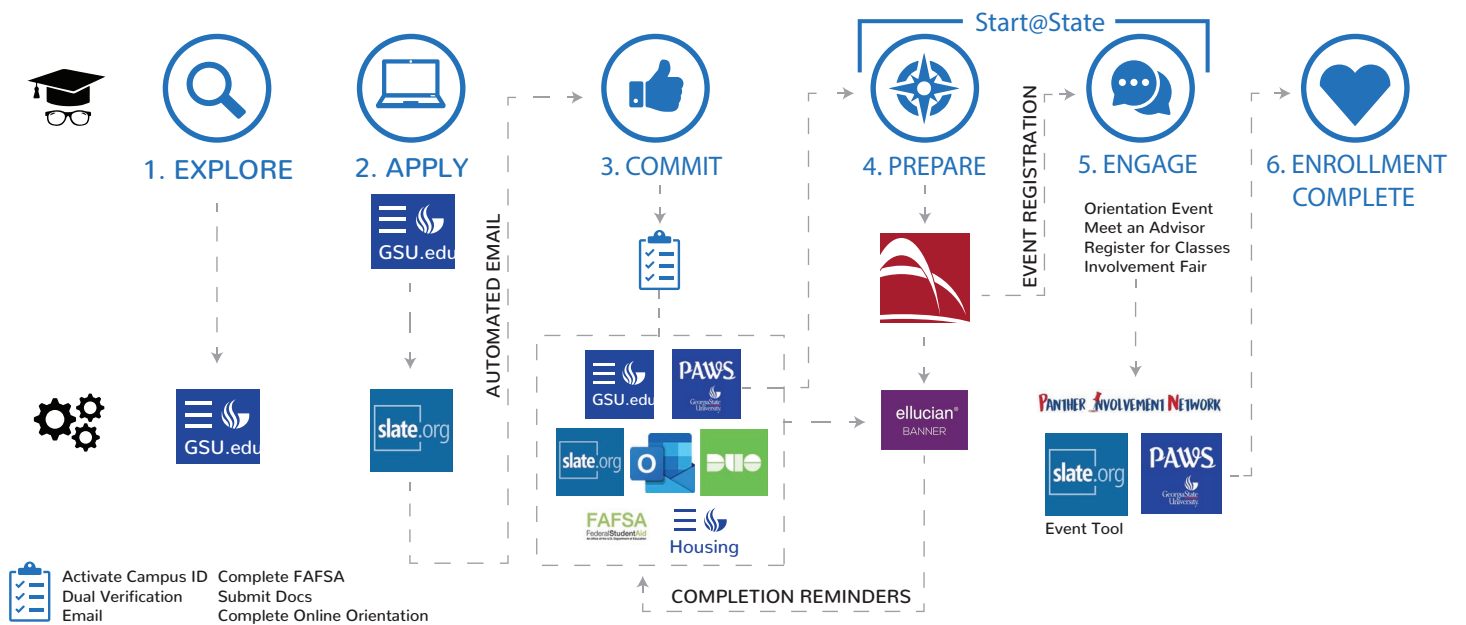| Profile Member Groups |
| --- |
| Atlanta Campus Freshmen |
| Atlanta Campus Transition |
| Atlanta Campus Transfers |
| Dual Enrollment |
| Employees |
| Families |
| Graduate Students |
| Online Only |
| Perimeter Campus Freshmen |
| Perimeter Campus Transfers & Transition |
| Staff |

Leveraging Technology

Tech-Enabled Student Onboarding Journey

For many, orientation is the gateway to the university. At each step of the student's journey toward enrollment, there's a piece of software, a system, a platform in place to support it. The big questions are how the systems fit together and where Advantage Orientation® fits within the process.

This map illustrates the various systems Georgia State uses at each student decision point and the processes behind the scenes. Advantage Orientation® is neatly positioned as the orientation entry point to "Start @ State" and helps students prepare to engage (steps four and five).

Outcomes

"There's a lot of different metrics you can pull from the system," Ben said. Using the Advantage Orientation's built-in administrative tools, metrics like time, number of slides viewed, completions, and quiz answers can all be analyzed from aggregate to individual views. Testing and analytics also indicated time to complete online orientation is approximately 32 minutes.

According to Ben, he has optimized the use of the platform's real-time reporting capabilities to re-engage with students who have yet to register for their in-person orientation session once they complete the online orientation.

Since launching "Start @ State," Georgia State experienced decreased orientation melt and no-show rates, contrary to some enrollment trends.
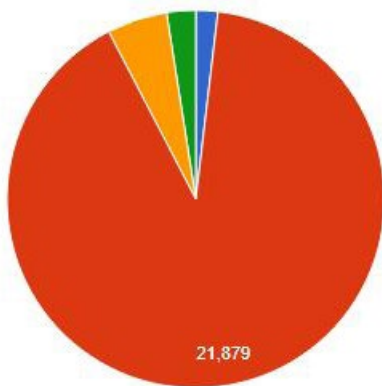
According to internal data, Georgia State achieved these improvements in one season:

- Oriented over 25K new students, families, and staff through online orientation
- Automated over 1200 manual hold releases
- Created greater flexibility for live presentations to more easily align with what students need to know, when they need to know it

Notable outcomes also include:
- Improved no-show rates to in-person orientation events by over 10%
- Enrolled the largest freshman class in University history

Interactive Quiz Aggregate Report View

1. What is the Panther Involvement Network (PIN)?

Correct Answer: B. A student interface for managing your Georgia State experiences.

RESPONSES	ENTRIES	PERCENT
A. A big cat adoption program at the Atlanta zoo.	455	1.88 %
B. A student interface for managing your Georgia State experiences.	21,879	90.48 %
C. A software coding club for managing Panther Athletics.	1,246	5.15 %
D. The team that maintains the uniform of our mascot Pounce.	600	2.48 %
TOTAL	24,180	

Going Forward

"Training is included with the system and it is super easy to learn and use with confidence.

…don't let fear of new technology prevent you from exploring this as an option."

"I started this job with little knowledge of website editing," Destiny said. "Training is included with the system and it is super easy to learn and use with confidence." Destiny encourages others to "not let fear of new technology prevent you from exploring this as an option." Slides can be updated in minutes and assigned to member groups at the click of a button.

Ben and Destiny adopted a project management style to keep orientation content fresh and serve each stakeholder across campus. Each member of the orientation team is assigned to support different departments. When changes impact content, they use their administrative access to make changes on demand in a matter of minutes.

"This tool is best utilized in collaboration with others," Ben said. "None of this content can exist within a silo and we can't do it without our wonderful campus partners. Advantage Design Group's writers can help, too." Destiny is championing a newly formed Start @ State Advisory Group. This group includes representatives from each stakeholder area (11 and counting) to conduct reviews, create new content, and address ways the program can be continuously improved.

About Advantage Design Group®

Advantage Design Group® is a multimedia production and software development firm established in 1998. This certified, woman-owned small business is the largest online orientation production company in North America, employing over 40 full-time staff. The company's diverse talent includes digital specialists in art direction, UX design, programming, video production, content development, project management and training.

Advantage Orientation®, the company's cloud-based orientation solution, is currently deployed by hundreds of higher education institutions in three countries. The platform provides an interactive and media-rich experience to support successful transitions for new students and new hires.

Visit AdvantageDesignGroup.com to request a live tour.

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