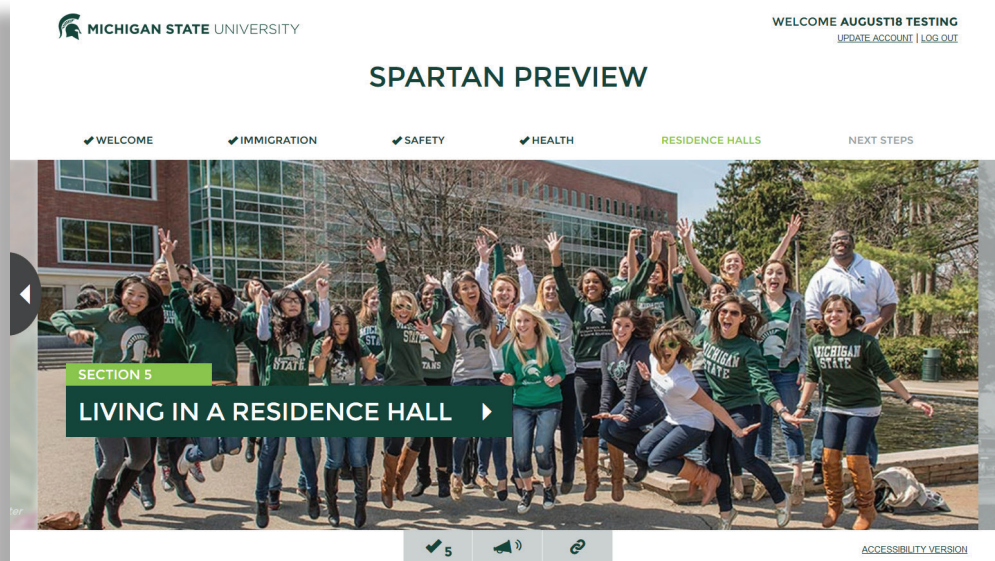


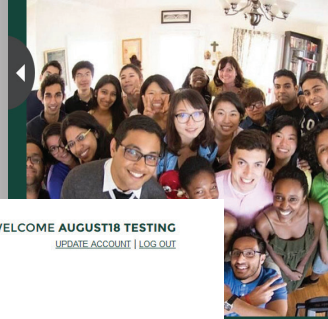
Spartan Preview: An American Welcome for International Students

Case Study

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



SLIDE 6 / 9 IN-HALL STAFF



While you are living in the residence halls, you will come in contact with many student staff members who will help to make your on-campus living experience great.

Two of the student team members who will be in contact with you the most will be the Resident Assistants (RA) and Intercultural Aides (ICA).

ASSISTANT (RA)

An RA is a student staff member that lives in the residence hall on a floor or wing. As a peer, an RA serves as a basic source of moral support, and assists residents in adjusting to campus life. The primary responsibility of an RA is to provide leadership and support to the residence hall community.

INTERCULTURAL AIDE (ICA)

An ICA is a student staff member who lives in the residence hall. The ICA is part of the Office of Academic and Cultural Transitions (OCAT). ICAs facilitate successful social, cultural and academic transitions at MSU. They provide personalized student contact, inform students about the campus, and provide opportunities for students to meet and interact with students of different cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Michigan State University had a problem that is a good one to have. The number of international students attracted to their school more than doubled between 2005 and 2012. The Office for International Students and Scholars did their best to communicate with incoming students via email and the web before the students arrived on campus, but found that these methods did not prepare students adequately for their arrival to the U.S. and MSU.

Orientation Methods Falling Short

Under the previous system, lengthy emails were sent to students every two weeks before arrival with links to information they needed.

Upon arrival, international students (often jet-lagged!) would be bombarded with information, beginning in large lecture halls at 8 am and continuing with back-to-back lectures throughout the day.

There was limited time to break into smaller groups of 20 or so, to allow for some personalized time. This time could be used to spend with peer leaders, on Q & A, and on community building and evening activities. The students were exhausted because of major information overload all at once and in a non-native language for most of them.

"We had to cram in so much, so we didn't have time to cover what they would really experience as international students. We didn't have time to do anything about culture shock. The students were not retaining information and made mistakes on immigration, academics, and safety," said Amber Cordell, Education Programs Manager in the Office for International Students and Scholars. "The critical information we needed students to understand during orientation did not get to them early enough and was not effective enough."

With all of these issues in mind, MSU began to consider better communication options. They set out to reach international students in a way that students were comfortable learning – online. In addition, they also wanted to showcase their campus so that international students who had never visited MSU knew what to expect and could get excited about coming to the U.S. The new students could also start thinking about how the new culture would differ from their own and could prepare before arrival.

How They Stepped Up Orientation

MSU began looking at companies to help them build an online pre-arrival orientation component that would serve as a preview for their international students. They knew they wanted the orientation to be high energy, be viewable in a short amount of time and include important information that students needed before coming to the U.S. Information such as laws and safety, immigration regulations, and differences in our healthcare system were among the issues that needed to be addressed early on in the orientation process. They wanted a system that was user-friendly for students. They also wanted a system that was easy for school administrators to manage the content.

They found Advantage Design Group.

MSU found Advantage Design Group's online orientation designs to be far above others that they had evaluated. The products Advantage Design offered were visually stimulating, and rich with features and the student tracking and reporting capabilities they needed. An example of a much needed feature was screen timers that encouraged the students to stay on screen to view the carefully prepared videos before moving to the next slide.

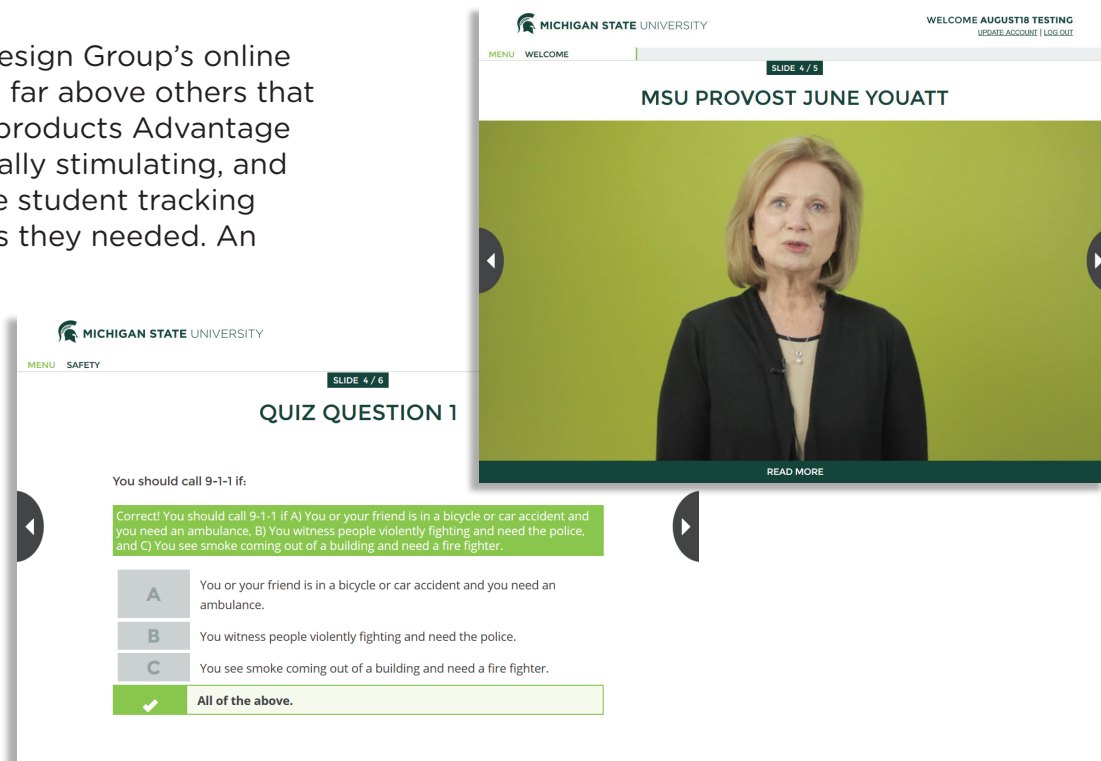
The Process

Before beginning the process, Ms. Cordell recommends having a good understanding of the time it will take to create an online orientation from proposal to finish. Fortunately, once the process began with Advantage Design Group, she was presented with a detailed plan and timeline for exactly when target dates for project components were to be completed.

Advantage Design Group's proven process also helped to keep things running smoothly by providing a writing template for text content and video scripts. The team was helpful with editorial reviews as needed and making the overall orientation a more cohesive piece. They delivered a final product truly customized to meet the needs of MSU.

MSU appreciated the creative process because they were able to choose from three professional concept designs, provide input, and develop their very own custom branded Spartan Preview.

The IT process was smooth as Advantage Design Group professionals worked directly with MSU's IT department to help ensure seamless IT development and testing, through to a successful launch.



Further, the training on the back office system exceeded MSU's expectations with easy to follow screens and reassurance that they can call any time with questions.

"The back end had certain features we wanted, and we appreciate the unlimited training," said Ms. Cordell. "Advantage Design Group was able to explain things and show us examples, and it's been great working with them. I felt they made us a priority and met our goals. We definitely knew we had them with us along the way."

The Results

The difference in the on-campus orientation experience for international students is evident. Now, with the Spartan Preview:

- ▶ Students feel more confident, comfortable and excited when they leave their countries for MSU. They know they are coming to a beautiful place because they've seen the campus online, and they are at ease knowing they will have resources and support available to help them succeed.
- ▶ Students retain more critical information through recaps of this important information in person, instead of lengthy in-depth lectures. This saves time and reduces the feeling of information overload. It also reduces scheduling conflicts that had occurred in the past.
- ▶ Students have more meaningful time when they arrive on campus for community building activities, ice breakers, culture orientation, and more time to interact with their peers in small groups. This leads to a more enjoyable and successful transition to campus life.

Advantage Design Group is an award-winning multimedia design and development firm based in Jacksonville, Florida. For nearly 20 years we've helped organizations show their story with a unique balance of creativity and technology. Today, our Advantage Orientation Platform is helping colleges and universities across America reach measurable goals for student orientation, transition, retention and success.

We can do the same for you. Contact us for a demonstration.

AdvantageDesignGroup.com
Student-Orientation.com

6877 Phillips Industrial Blvd
Jacksonville, FL 32256
800.657.1338
info@AdvantageDesignGroup.com



ADVANTAGE[®]
DESIGN GROUP



In fact, MSU has even been able to implement a much needed "culture shock" workshop that speaks directly to students about how to make friends across cultures and how to handle normal feelings when living and studying abroad, among other topics.

MSU and their students are now thrilled that such vital pre-orientation information is delivered ahead of time. We know that the generation to whom we are appealing doesn't want to read a lot of information, so the video and interactive format is just the key to keeping them interested and sailing through the program. Also, seeing subtitles in English as well as Mandarin is impressive.

"Overall, this has been a positive experience and we're glad we partnered with Advantage Design Group. We feel sure that this product will help us reduce the immigration mistakes we are seeing as well as other issues that we've now been able to clarify through this format. It has made the orientation process so much smoother for our students. This has been a good investment that will last a long time."