

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Welcome to your Graduate School Experience

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Issac, Pruitt-Logan, and Upcraft (1995) called the graduate students' experience "the great unaddressed academic issue in higher education" (p. 13). Since the mid-1990s, there has been significant research seeking to bring a new understanding to this issue. Many of the existing studies have examined a single institution or one population within multiple institutions. Studies have also been conducted on graduate student socialization and its effect on student success. Yet, what still remains to be explored is how evaluation of graduate student orientation can improve the student socialization experience. This study seeks to fill that gap by applying a standard evaluation to three universities from the Mid-American Conference (MAC) and assessing the successes or shortcomings of these orientation programs as a means of socialization. This study's overarching question asks to what extent is orientation a successful means of socializing graduate students to their respective universities. Results from qualitative data analysis revealed that post-orientation, on-campus connections contributed more often as a measure of effectiveness at socializing students to graduate school. This research offers implications – based on data – for the theories and application surrounding orientation programs.