

Shea Ellingham  
Manager of Academic Advising

Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Sarah Rude  
Student Success Coordinator

## Background

Mount Royal University assembled a team of student affairs professionals to launch a one-day registration event for new students. This team considered:

Challenges of transition in the first year of post-secondary

Mount Royal's program yield rates and student course loads

## Relevant Theories

In order for students to be successful they must have a firm grasp of their program, their institution and the support services available to them; they must have **a sense of belonging** (Tinto, 2012; Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2009).

However, it's not simply awareness and understanding that affects student success, it's also their own engagement and momentum. **Academic momentum** suggests that the more credits students complete in their first year of post-secondary education, the more likely their chances of graduation (Attewell, Heil, & Reisel, 2012).

Furthermore, establishing and reinforcing expectations are also influential in the completion of a post-secondary credential (Tinto, 2012) and a **sense of connectedness to an institution** is a critical factor in student success (Lizzio, 2006).

## Outcomes

Increase applicant yield of Mount Royal programs

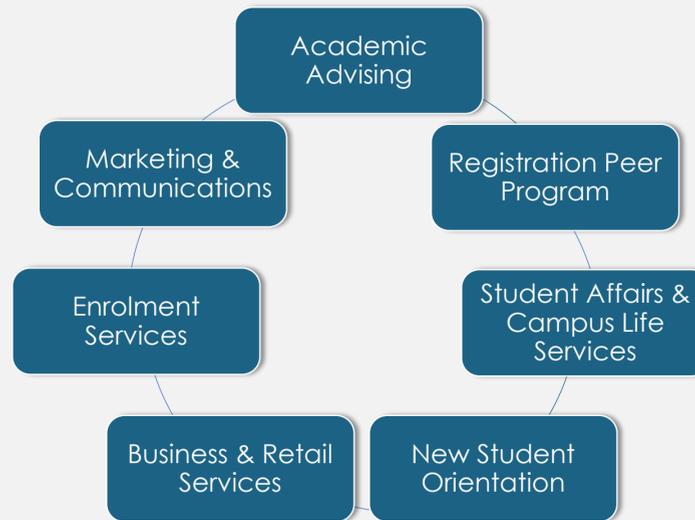
Increase the academic momentum and course load of new students

Foster a sense of belonging and connectedness

Create a development opportunity for student volunteers

## New Student Registration Day

With a focus on academic advising and peer registration help, students and their parents were welcomed to campus to learn about their programs, their university and the services available to help them be successful.



### Advising

- Opportunity to meet advisor
- Program specific academic advising session
- *Students only*

### Peer Registration

- Peer-to-peer support in computer labs
- Navigating schedule building & course registration
- *Students only*

### Parent

- Focus on student transition to university
- Parent roles & avenues of support
- *Parents only*

### Services

- Services fair (focus on Residence & Accessibility)
- Financing your education workshop

## Results

Of the students who attended Spring 2017 New Student Registration, **85%** attended the **Fall 2017** semester and **81%** attended the **Winter 2018** semester.

Those who attended New Student Registration registered in more courses than those who did not attend. This can be linked to academic momentum and retention.

**Attended NSR**

**4.4**

**Did Not Attend**

**3.5**

Before attending New Student Registration **80%** of students noted Mount Royal as their first choice university. After attending New Student Registration, this number rose to **100%**

**"I absolutely loved NSR. The students were so receptive of the help they were receiving & it was extremely rewarding to get to help them become part of our MRU community"**

- Peer Registration Volunteer -

## References

- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25(4), 297-308.
- Attewell, P., Heil, S., & Reisel, L. (2012). What is academic momentum? And does it matter? *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(1), 27-44.
- Kuh, G. D. (2004). Student engagement in the first year of college. In Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot (Eds.), *Challenging and Supporting the first-year student: A handbook for improving the first-year of college* (pp. 86-107). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lizzio, A. (2006). *Designing an orientation and transition strategy for commencing students*. Griffith University: First Year Experience Project.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: IL: University of Chicago Press.