



“For the Blue, and the Orange, and the White” Summer of a UTSA Orientation Leader George Tharakan, Cybersecurity, 2022

Leadership

SUMMARY

Over the summer I was privileged to work as an Orientation Leader (OL) for the office of Orientation and Family Programs at UTSA for 6 weeks. As an OL I was tasked with leading groups of up to 50 first-year, transfer, or international students through a 2-day orientation program twice a week. I had various responsibilities from facilitating sessions, to leading tours, to performing in skits. I sought to inform and advise the students on various elements of campus life and promoted involvement at UTSA. Personally, I wanted to create friendships and be an active member of UTSA’s student body. My professional goal as an OL was to get an experience of leadership on campus and to be a mentor to help students at UTSA.



SPICES

An OL is one of the first faces an incoming student sees at the institution. As an OL I learned to command, but also to listen. It is essential to be trustworthy to reassure the student that the student’s best interest in mind.

HERBS

I honored each student’s perspective and background. Every campus tour, college skit, and question panel that I facilitated in demonstrated my benevolence with my time and energy. Throughout my experience I supported both colleagues as well as students.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Over the summer communicating effectively was paramount as the students and family members relied on me for the correct information. Team Learning was another outcome from the summer. With such a high number of people on campus all of the OLs had to work together on various projects in order to ensure that the program ran smoothly. The final outcome was agency through accomplishment as I was awarded the OL of the Year for my work.



IMPACT

Through my actions as an OL the university has more informed, engaged, and excited members to its student body. I can assuredly say that I had an impact on a large percentage of the approximately 5000 incoming students to UTSA, and I know I made the transition to college for a majority of these students something to look forward to rather than dread. I constantly see and talk to a lot of my previous students from the summer. Personally this experience made me a much better leader and more aware of the different backgrounds and viewpoints that each student brings.

ADVICE

Do not be afraid or intimidated—you can do it. Spend time with both your students and colleagues to build bonds and friendships. Learn the strengths of others and build each other up.