

New Faculty Orientation: The Defining Elements

1. **The Theme:** You are the future of Fort Hays State University—the university is relying on you—and everybody’s waiting on you to make a difference. A little pressure? You bet. But we didn’t hire you to simply “Stand and deliver.” That’s too easy in today’s fast moving and challenging higher education workplace. Although I could get specific, I won’t. Suffice it to say we hired you to be creative, innovative, team players, people who can solve the so-called problems and challenges of a competitive higher education environment and, most importantly, risk takers. Faculty who are willing to step out and take a chance as you assume the responsibility of inventing the future of FHSU.
2. **The Goals of New Faculty Orientation:** Preparedness and Bonding. We want you to develop relationships with the new people coming in with you and be prepared to pursue the organizational values I mentioned a moment ago. Most importantly, you need to know the vision and values of the organizational culture and how FHSU works. Along the way, we’ll also help you develop some new skills and knowledge to further your chances for success. How do we do these things?
3. We break orientation down into two phases and facilitate bonding at two levels. Phase I of orientation is the activities you will participate in over the next three days. Day three you will join current faculty as they get reoriented. We think we’ve got some great things lined up for you with regard to understanding the physical layout of the campus and understanding the surrounding culture of the local community with a new faculty tour of our Volga German and English villages. Phase II of orientation begins when you start attending the individual sessions where you will learn about the academic workplace, faculty leadership and institutional change issues. This second phase will last the entire year (free lunches) and cover topics that should help you see both the trees and the forest. Some faculty see the trees. Some faculty see the forest. High-performing faculty see both.

4. Your orientation has been designed to facilitate “horizontal linkages” as you gain a sense of friendship, comradery, and trust with your new colleagues—people who are sharing the orientation experience with you. Orientation has also been designed to facilitate “vertical linkages” by having you meet members of senior management during the next two days and senior faculty over the next two semesters at the workshop sessions. Interactivity is the key dynamic here.
5. In closing, let me say orientation is designed to help you fit into the existing FHSU. But I see orientation defined in terms of preparedness and bonding as the best chance to transform FHSU. Hopefully, you will end up seeing FHSU not only as it is, but also a vision of what it could be. OK, let’s meet those “links” in the vertical chain.