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# Designing and Deploying a Virtual IT Services Orientation for First-Year Undergraduate Students in Moodle

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## ABSTRACT

Lehigh University's Library & Technology Services (LTS) department developed a virtual gamified orientation designed to educate first-year students on the most important library and technology services offered. Prior to this virtual orientation, LTS held optional on-site orientations for first-year students, which had low attendance rates. The low attendance likely resulted in many first-year students lacking awareness of the services LTS offered and where to ask for assistance regarding the services. The LTS Ramp Up is a modular course built and administered in Moodle that introduces first-year students to the core library and technology services that will support academic success and facilitate a productive scholarly experience. The course features digital badges and prizes to incentivize participation and utilized Panopto to create several closed-captioned instructional video shorts. The end goals of the course were to empower first-year students with the information needed to successfully begin using LTS services, introduce them to Lehigh's branded installation of Moodle, and provide the convenience of self-paced online learning.

## CCS CONCEPTS

**Applied computing-E-learning** • *Social and professional topics-Information technology education*

## KEYWORDS

Gamification; learning management system; first-year students; instructional technology; Moodle; library and technology orientation

## ACM Reference Format:

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Lehigh University, located in Bethlehem Pennsylvania, is a private research university with an undergraduate student body of 5,075 and a graduate student body of 1,979. Lehigh's 2021 class is comprised of students from 41 states and 31 countries. Lehigh's merged organization, Library and Technology Services (LTS), delivers expertise in a broad range of fields including pedagogy, library research and collection management, instructional technology, administrative support, digital scholarship, academic writing, information technology, web services, research computing, network and systems administration, cybersecurity, and systems support.

Lehigh's first-year students arrive on campus in late August and have an intensive four-day orientation called First-Year Experience (FYE) that includes both mandatory and optional tours, learning experiences, and a to-do checklist in the online student portal. Throughout FYE, students learn about the campus including academic culture, policies, support, and procedures, and are required to choose and attend academic talks given by professors, staff, and students on topics ranging from astronomy to sustainability. In addition, they also are encouraged to participate in many socializing opportunities both on and off-campus.

With so much emphasis put on culture, socialization, and acclimating to the academic environment, LTS and its services have not been a consistent part of FYE. Past orientation efforts to introduce first-year students to LTS services included optional time slots in the FYE schedule to visit a particular location on campus to talk with LTS staff members. Because these orientation sessions were not required and potentially conflicted with required sessions, they were not well-attended.

In order to better understand the impact and results of past orientation and outreach efforts, staff members within LTS held focus groups and distributed surveys to enrolled undergraduate and graduate students, including first-year students. Survey and focus group feedback revealed that students lacked awareness of LTS services and that there was a need for more effective outreach. Some responses on overall LTS orientation from anonymous feedback participants included:

“It could improve on the outreach part to everyone. As most of the stuff required at Lehigh is available but a lot of the students and staff do not know about it.”

“Letting incoming students know what is available to them. It took me a while to find out.”

“Make available services more known to student body.”

“They could improve on getting the information about their resources out to the first-year students.”

“Letting students/staff know about the technology and software available.”

“I’m not really sure what LTS does to be quite honest.”

Other pertinent feedback responses echoed frustrations with WIFI, printing, and software services as well as a need for study spaces and embedded librarians. Feedback also indicated that students thought the summer before their arrival was the best time to learn about services provided by LTS.

## 2 STRATEGIZING THE ORIENTATION

In response to the feedback received specifically within the context of orientation, LTS made the decision to design and develop an online gamified library and technology orientation for first-year students arriving in August 2017. The objectives behind the decision directly involved the need to incentivize the activity, highlight key LTS services, and provide a direct means of introducing our branded instance of Moodle.

Starting in December 2016, a team comprised of service desk staff, librarians, instructional technologists, and computing consultants was assembled. Team members were tasked with creating course content, identifying prizes, testing gamification features, finalizing sections and format of content, enrolling users, and testing the overall functionality of the course. Areas that needed additional communication and coordination efforts were account provisioning, automation of enrollment in Moodle, displaying the course as a checklist item in the online student portal, and integration into the FYE program.

In order to facilitate the process, bi-weekly meetings were scheduled throughout the Spring 2017 semester and test-user accounts were provisioned within the LTS account provisioning system. A timeline was drafted to help guide the team to its projected completion date in June in order for the course to go live in July.

## 3 ORIENTATION STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The gamified orientation was designed as a modular course in Moodle and was branded as the LTS Ramp Up. Gamification features included activity completion (a checklist feature native

to Moodle), digital badges in Moodle, “Easter eggs” (bonus hints/tidbits that popped up at certain points), and random prizes including Lehigh branded items and Amazon gift cards ranging from \$25.00 to a \$500 grand prize.

Course modules were designed to be completed in a linear fashion and organized into four consecutive levels. Students were able to progress by completing the required activities for the level they were on. Upon level completion, students were awarded a digital badge and entered into prize drawings. Subsequent levels offered additional badges and larger prizes in order to incentivize full course completion.

Course modules familiarized incoming students with Moodle, LTS buildings and service locations, librarians, finding library materials, course software, networking, security, and printing. The actual course activities for the various modules consisted of structured lessons within Moodle, videos using Panopto, and static web content.

For example, the activities within level two were designed to educate students about course-related software available through LTS. Two of the activities included closed-captioned Panopto videos demonstrating how students can create their Office 365 accounts and download Microsoft Office 2016. At the end of each video, students were required to answer a single quiz question within Panopto. After answering the quiz questions correctly and completing the remaining activities within the level, students were awarded with a digital badge, entered into the prize drawing for level two, and allowed to complete the activities in level three. Other notable activities included requiring students to use the service desk chat system and submit a practice assignment in Moodle.

The end goal of the course content was to provide students with the information on how and where to ask for help with library or technology questions, how to download and access software required for courses, how to access library resources, how and where to print, how to connect to the secure WIFI network, and how to identify phishing scams.

## 4 TRANSITIONING THE ORIENTATION

After all course content was created, tested and approved by the team members, the LTS Ramp Up was communicated to incoming first-year students via email, posted to various social media outlets, and included in the online student portal as an optional checklist item to complete prior to August 25th (with the first day of classes being on August 28th).

## 5 OUTCOMES AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to the launch of the LTS Ramp Up for first-year students, LTS conducted a small pilot during a summer online orientation, which was not integrated into the FYE; the response rate was 15%. It is important to note that the LTS Ramp Up was not

included as a checklist item in the online student portal for the summer online orientation. In July 2017, the LTS Ramp Up was officially launched for FYE orientation. After FYE was over, the LTS Ramp UP team was able to use statistics collected from the number of badges awarded in Moodle to find that out of 1,311 first-year students 73% completed at least one course level and 40% completed the entire course. These statistics were a significant leap in the number of first-year students LTS was able to reach compared to past orientations and demonstrated the success of the project.

Future iterations of the LTS Ramp Up are planned to include interactive panoramic tours of our facilities such as study spaces, the student hardware repair desk, the service desk, and various key points within the libraries. Feedback from additional testing indicated the LTS Ramp Up audience should be expanded to include all incoming graduate students in addition to first-year students. To ensure the course continues to meet its objectives, the LTS Ramp Up committee will periodically assemble focus groups comprised of undergraduate and graduate students to review the relevance of course modules.

The awarded prizes were most likely a strong incentive to participate. One thing to note about prizes such as gift cards were that students who received gift cards were required to be notified about potential tax implications in regards to reporting the winning amounts. In addition to Lehigh-branded items, future prizes will include popular technology-trending items such as expandable phone grips (PopSockets), battery chargers, and headphones.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

By dramatically changing the format and delivery and by adding incentive via gamification and prizes, LTS was able to increase its numbers for first-year student orientation interaction. Instead of forcing students to come to LTS, students were provided with the convenience of learning about LTS on their own time, reducing the number of decisions they had to make in their orientation schedule.

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