The Finest of First Impressions

Students to the Cal Poly Family

SOAR leaders welcome new students and family members to the university through SOAR. To that end, SOAR leaders grow presentations to parents and students on matters such as academics, time management, alcohol and drugs, and more. "The program is designed to provide our incoming students and their families with a successful transition to the university," student leader Justin Bautista said.

When it comes to new-student orientation at Cal Poly, Orientation Programs administrators and student leaders agree on what it takes to be an effective SOAR leader and make that good first impression. SOAR leaders Scott Kjorlien and Justin Bautista gather to explore downtown San Luis Obispo.

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It also helps to draw out the sometimes-shy new students and get them participating and asking questions. That’s important, said Kjorlien; where WOW leaders spend several days with new students and keep in touch with them throughout their first year, SOAR leaders have only two days to make an impression.

SOAR leaders must be mentally agile and prepared for all sorts of questions from new students and parents. And if they don’t know the answer to a question, a good SOAR leader will know who to ask to find it.

Every student and every family is different, said Justin Bautista, a fourth-year mechanical engineering major. We just need to give them the tools to solve whatever problems they might encounter and introduce them to the resources they have on campus.

Most importantly, he added, we just need to be honest. Students and parents want to hear about our experiences at Cal Poly.

That willingness and desire to share their own stories and help ease the transition of newer students draws many SOAR leaders to the job.

Crane who transferred to Cal Poly two years ago said SOAR and WOW played a huge part in helping her settle in to campus. She tries to make sure other new students reap the same benefits.

Bautista, though, said he failed to take full advantage of the orientation process. I didn’t give WOW my all when I started, and I regretted it later, he said. I missed out on the fun of it.

Find out more about the SOAR program online at here.