



Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Well, I think when families first arrive, we're all about the Orange welcome. So we'll talk about the Goon Squad, but we have tons of students, faculty and staff who are there to greet the students. Our goal is for our new students and their families to feel immediate part of our Orange family and be excited to be here.

Our orientation program is a mix of academic and social connection programming with the goal for students to feel connected to each other, start to build friendships and relationships, relationships with the university that Orange pride, and then also get connected with their academic unit. Learn more about their school college, learn more about the staff and the faculty that work in that space, and then also get to know their classmates.

John Boccacino:

Sending a loved one away to school can elicit a lot of feelings of you can feel remorse over the distance, you can feel a fear over how they're going to handle being away from home for the first time, but we are here to help. And I love the volunteer aspect. There's so many people that get involved and give back during Syracuse Welcome.

I'd be remiss if I didn't start with the Goon Squad members. The Goon Squad celebrates its 78th year this year. Hard to believe 78 years. It feels like it's been longer of our Goon Squad students helping out. What exactly is a Goon Squad and what role will they play to offer both a welcoming and friendly face and helpful arms and hands in the moving process?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Love talking about the Goon Squad. It's a campus tradition that my and myself and my team feel a lot of pride and honor really to be the keepers of that tradition and keep it moving. So the Goon Squad was started in 1944. Initially it was a group of students who had to reinforce the new students wearing beanies. They used to have to wear beanies.

That tradition very, very quickly just evolved into a new student welcome team. So returning students would come together and they would help the students move in. They would be part of events.

That's such a great question. So we do have the

I think what we've been able to enhance is the technology around that process, using electronic signup processes that have improved over the years. So the goal would be for a student and their family to be able to pick the day and time that they move in.

So with enhanced technology, that process has gone very well. It's removed some steps. And then the on campus team, our colleagues in parking services, department of public safety are huge to helping make sure all of this works, the traffic flow, making sure students know where they're going, getting people in lines.

So we have all the right people on campus who are involved and commit the time into planning. If I might highlight, the patience piece of it, right? So the student and family end of it, waiting is hard.

My nephew said that once when he was six. It's hard to wait and it stays with me because it is hard to wait. And so you may be waiting in your car for a while. Sometimes that's difficult to do. But I've also heard families tell me they had an unexpected hour with their student that they could just spend time together and talk.

And that ends up being kind of a special memory for families. Or I've had people tell me, they just popped a movie on their iPad and just kind of chilled. Because you just kind of got to wait. So quoting my nephew, it is hard to wait. But I'm hoping that the end result is kind of worth that wait time.

John Boccacino:

You've assigned, there's assigned move in times.

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Yes.

John Boccacino:

And dates for the families to bring their loved one here to campus. But there always seems to be a couple of parents or a couple family members who think, "Oh, what's it going to hurt if I go a couple minutes early or try to line up ahead of my time slot?" What would you tell those Renegade family members to keep them in line?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Oh, Renegade, that's funny. We love people to stick to their time as best as possible. And that's how we manage that traffic flow. Right? And we have people do the different time blocks to manage wait times, but also manage safety and security and traffic.

So it is preferred that people come right around their move in time. When we start moving at 9:00 AM, have I had families who are lined up at 6:30 in the morning? Yes I have. But that is not something that people need to do.

John Boccacino:

It's this phenomenon, it seems like every year where you get two schools of thoughts for the families, they either bring everything in the kitchen sink or they bring the bare minimum to get through the first couple weeks of the semester. It's okay if you forget something, right? You don't need to pack everything for the next four, five, six months in your van when you're coming to Syracuse.

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

That's such a great question. So I think leaning into that, I don't want to call it anxiety space, but leaning into that space of, "I'm bringing my student to school. I want to leave them with everything they need."

There is a certain amount of stress related to the shopping and the packing and the room set up. The big box stores will make you think that you need so much stuff that you don't need. So there's that. And then also Instagram's a problem, John, right?

Because people post pictures of these elaborately decorated residence hall rooms, and then people are thinking, "Oh, that's what my room needs to look like." I don't know what your room looked like when you were in college, mine was pretty basic.

I remember having a very detailed conversation with my mother about the comforter that I chose. And she said, "You better like it, because you're going to use it for four years." Which honestly, actually we still have at my parents camp.

But I digress the stuff, the stuff is a thing. You have to remember, the room is small. And you may not be able to pick out the perfect storage item in advance, right? You may get in there and start to set up and say, "Gosh, I really need this bucket I think to keep my toiletries in," that kind of thing.

So I think coming in a minimalist approach is good. You can go out typically and run some errands after and maybe pick up a storage thing. Also in the world that we live in with online deliveries, students can have stuff shipped to their room and or they're building, right?

They get packages there down at the main desk, so they can always get something shipped. In terms of clothing too. So as you know, John, it can get a little chilly in Syracuse, right? So sometimes also we'll recommend bring that fall, late summer to early fall wardrobe.

If a student's able to go home at Thanksgiving, that's a good time to maybe switch out some stuff. Or if a family member's coming for family weekend, send back the shorts and give me the fleeces, that kind of stuff. So you can kind of strategize on how the clothing situation will work and that kind of thing.

John Boccacino:

What are



On Wednesday, August 24th, we are having nineties night, which again, our students kind of came up with that concept. We're going to play old nineties music videos and have a lot of glow in the dark stuff. And just, I don't know a lot of things that are nineties, throwback to the nineties.

So that'll be really fun. I'm very excited to see what that looks like. As somebody who was in college and high school in the nineties, I'm excited to relive that part of my youth, right? And Thursday, August 25th, is really a special day. That's our official kickoff to Syracuse Welcome. It's that official Syracuse University student moment.

We have our new student convocation. That's a program where families are invited and encouraged to attend. We have a celebration on

And I really, I love that. I love the meaning behind it and the specialness of it and that our families can be there to participate. Now we also know that not everybody can stay or not everybody can travel to Syracuse.

So that program is also going to be live streamed this year. That's one of those post COVID things that I lean into as something we've learned is how to live stream thing so that we can be inclusive of everybody. So for first, for families who aren't able to attend, we'll have that live stream available on our website.

John Boccacino:

One last question I want to get to and concerning... It concerns when is the right time for parents and family members to leave their son, their daughter, their family member here at campus.

I know that there's no right answer, but what advice do you have out there as a mother yourself when it comes to, when is it appropriate for the family member to say their goodbye to the student?

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Oh, it's funny. I knew you were going to ask me that. So what we recommend to families is that they leave by 12 or 1:00 PM on Friday, which is the 26th of August. We have some family programming, the schools and colleges will host some family information sessions that morning. And then you really need to let the student do their thing. They have academic sessions, they have other things going on.

So that moment is hard, right? It's hard to leave, but we got to let them do it. Right? We got to let them spread their wings and fly. Not to be cheesy, but I think then it's like the, what's next? Right? So it's okay to have a good cry on your way home in the car. And when you get home, could I give a little post Syracuse Welcome first year advice for families as well, John?

John Boccacino:

That's what we have you on here for, Carrie.

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Right.

John Boccacino:

Lay it on us.

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

Yeah. So I think the thing is, is that it's an adjustment, right? It's an adjustment for you not to have your student at home. It's an adjustment for the student not to be there. And so maybe talk in advance about how often you're going to talk.

Are you calling me five times a day? How much are you supposed to be texting me? If I don't pick up the phone, I might be in class. It's good for families to know their student's class schedule so they can just know and expect to hear from you.

Students are going to be quick to call their families when things aren't going well. Right? That's a moment when I need my mom or my support person. I don't think I did well on my first test. I'm not sure I'm getting along with my roommate. And what will happen the next day or even a couple hours later, whatever happened with the roommate is fine.



You get that test back and you did fine. But it's in that moment that you forget to call home or you forget to text your parent and be,

going to go very smoothly coming up. Thanks for all you do, and thanks for lending your expertise here on the podcast.

Carrie Grogan Abbott:

It was wonderful. Thanks for having me.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the Cuse Conversations podcast. My name is John Boccacino signing off for the Cuse Conversations podcast.