How to continue student engagement from enrolment through orientation and into semester
Mentor program pre-2009

- Peer to peer mentoring
- 8 new students with 1 later-year trained mentor
- Each mentor group has a ‘buddy’ mentor group
- Students are allocated to a group based on where they live
- Program ran formally from orientation into first semester, but in reality only went for orientation period due to low uptake.
Motivations for altering the program

• Feedback from first years and mentors. They wanted:
  – More opportunities to get to know each other in Orientation week
  – Assistance in engaging first year students beyond Orientation

• University direction
  – Monash’s student experience framework

• We wanted:
  – Creative, team building tasks, to highlight key transition issues
  – Enhanced links between first year students and key information sources
First change: Online forum for new students

- **Blackboard site: FY2009 -My community**
  - Moderated, members only space to seek answers.
  - One discussion board, mentor challenge material, resources from Orientation and links to web resources (e.g. *First year – getting started website*)

- **Blackboard page attracted 3729 user sessions.**
  - Highest usage was before orientation and first three weeks of semester.
  - All but 29 students visited, most came an average of 12 times and 108 students were still visiting in June.
  - Why did they visit? 1. discussion board, 2. Mentor challenge, 3. resources
Second change: Extension of mentor program activities into semester

- Week 1: Familiarising yourself with uni: where to find things and people: Scavenger hunt
- Week 2: Academic changes: differences and good study practices: Crossword
- Week 3: Seeking help: services at the university: design a board game
- Week 4: Survival week social bowling!
What worked

• Cross promotion good: website, enrolment day, blog/MUSO site, letter to students, between each extension activity

• Collaboration between staff in all areas – particularly Learning Skills and Health, Wellbeing and Development

and what didn’t

• Need for more engaging and varied mentor challenge activities suited to young adults.

• Greater need to utilise dynamic nature of blackboard