

The Believe in Blue project was coordinated by the Office of Orientation and Intercollegiate Athletics as a part of Panther Prowl, an extensive orientation program for incoming freshmen and transfer students. All new students were invited to O'Brien Stadium where they were greeted by members of each of the varsity athletic teams. The student-athletes presented each new student with a "Believe in Blue" t-shirt.

After students were given their t-shirts, they were directed into the stands of the stadium by EIU orientation leaders and seated in a formation to form the letters EIU. Students were welcomed and taught the school fight song by the university president, vice president for student affairs, and athletic director. A photograph was taken of the student formation in the stands; this photograph was later posted on EIU's website so that students could download the photo as a keepsake.

The Believe in Blue project was special because it touched several different areas that are important to maintaining a positive environment on a University campus. The project created a sense of belonging for the new students. They were shown that EIU is their school and that they have a place and are truly welcome and wanted by the campus community. This could certainly have an impact on retention rates among these students.

Second, the project involved collaboration with different departments on campus. The Office of Orientation and Intercollegiate Athletics were able to cooperate as one unit and make this event truly special for the students. Student-athletes were able to connect with orientation leaders, and both groups were able to meet and greet the new students, who may be future athletes or orientation leaders.

Third, the project started something that could become a tradition. Everyone involved enjoyed the project and how it was presented. The project has the potential to grow and become an Eastern tradition involving the participation of more departments. The collaboration, set, use of the technology that made the photo available to all the students, and overall good nature of the day is something that could make this event more spectacular in years to come. New students who were sitting in the stands one year may be the ones doing the meeting and greeting of the new students the following year.