



BROWN POLO UPDATE

Lehigh University
Orientation Leader &
Camp Hawk Counselor
Alumni Newsletter



SPRING 2026

A NOTE FROM THE OFYE

As we reflect on the past year, we're filled with gratitude for the moments that continue to define the OFYE community — from the excitement of Move-In to the everyday interactions where our staff support, guide, and celebrate first-year students. Watching our team show up with passion, empathy, and dedication reminds us every day why this work matters.

Each year brings a new class, new opportunities, and new challenges. Our commitment remains the same: creating a community where first-year students feel welcomed, supported, and empowered to succeed. We set the bar high because we believe in the potential of our students and our staff — and year after year, they rise to meet it.

The spirit of one team, one dream continues to guide our work. When we support one another and work toward a shared goal, we create something bigger than ourselves — a community where students can truly thrive and where everyone has a place.

In a world that can sometimes feel uncertain, the importance of inclusive, caring communities has never been clearer. We are deeply grateful for the staff we work with each day and for all of you who remain such an important part of the OFYE family. It brings us so much joy to stay connected and to see the incredible things you are doing. Please keep sharing your stories, memories, and successes with us.

We love you all and appreciate the impact you've had — and continue to have — on this community.

Stay Lehigh STRONG!

Stefanie DiDomenico & Nicole Burke



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STAFF UPDATES

WELCOME THE NEW OFYE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR!



My name is Carlee Warfield, and I am the new Assistant Director of First-Year Experience. I started at Lehigh in July after graduating from Rosemont College with an M.Ed in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration. In the OFYE, I support transfer and commuter students, plan Year2@LU programming, coordinate Discover Lehigh, and lead Camp Hawk/Camp Hawk: Snowed In. Outside of work, I enjoy arts and crafts, baking, and spending time with my cats.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST YEAR



♡ 👁 📍 Congratulations Graduating Staff!



♡ 👁 📍 Exploring Bethlehem with Discover Lehigh



♡ 👁 📍 The first teal family!



♡ 👁 📍 Welcome to Lehigh, Class of 2029!



♡ 👁 📍 OLs kicking off 2025 Orientation



♡ 👁 📍 Celebrating the 2025 Orientation Staff!



♡ 👁 📍 Fun weekend with Camp Hawk 2025!



♡ 👁 📍 Returner Retreat & Halloween fun!



♡ 👁 📍 Team building at the Staff Retreat

2026 ORIENTATION COORDINATORS

Throughout the year, Orientation Coordinators train and manage the Orientation and Camp Hawk staff, inspiring students to be the best leaders they can be. We support a staff of over 100 students all dedicated to supporting first year students in their transition to Lehigh. Through intentional skill building and team building activities, our goal is to cultivate an inclusive community where student leaders feel empowered to guide a group of First Year students through their respective programs. As Orientation Coordinators we are committed to making a positive impact on the Lehigh community and help others make the most of their Lehigh Experience.

Back Row:

Matt Schafer
Riley Hillen
Mason Marchese
Ruby Doolan
Ian Kenyon

Front Row:

Leela Deshpande
Gwenn Peckham
Sophia Kaupp



2026 RETURNING ORIENTATION LEADERS

Breanna Blanar
Olivia Camarinha
Cole Chatterjee
Brian Collins
Andrew Curtin
Charlie Ettinger
Michael Flynn
Rachel Greca
Gianna Grillo
Martha Hudson

Jacob Kane
Daniel Kaukonen
Jordan Knox
Kailey Miller
Kylie Mirabile
Sofia Paggi
Christian Palmieri
Sejal Patel
Maddie Pilla
Aeriel Revivo

Max Russo
Ryan Rust
Benjamin Scemama de Gialluly
Madi Silverman
Charlotte Strange
Aaron Strawn
Mackenzie Strohl
Alex Torres
Charlotte Witmer-Rich



TRAINING THROUGH TIME!

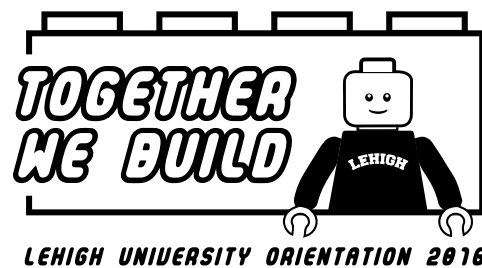
Orientation Training is not complete without that wonderful theme! Take a journey with us to look at some of the past OL themes!!! Each theme that is chosen has a message that makes the Orientation program stronger! The theme for 2025 was The Wizard of Oz!



PAST THEMES

- 2005: LUau (Hawaiian)
- 2006: First-Year Round Up (Western)
- 2007: Hollywood
- 2008: Army: Boot Camp
- 2009: Survivor
- 2010: Clue
- 2011: Harry Potter
- 2012: Lion King
- 2013: The Hunger Games
- 2014: Up

- 2015: Pirates of the Caribbean
- 2016: Legos
- 2017: Hollywood
- 2018: Spy
- 2019: Olympics
- 2020: Safari Expedition
- 2021: Star Wars
- 2022: Mount Olympus
- 2023: Space
- 2024: Mario Kart



OL SPOTLIGHT

Past & Present



Tyler Schmid '21

What are you up to/doing now?

About a year ago, I started working at WHOOP, an exciting wearable technology company. Prior to that, I spent four years at a medical device company after graduating from Lehigh which was a great experience where I learned a wide variety of skills. If possible, I would advise everyone to work at a small company after graduation because you truly learn a variety of skills that prepare you for anything in your field.

On the personal side, life has been full. It's been a busy ski season with plenty of turns, and I've recently started my own small custom machine embroidery business. I'm based in Cambridge, MA, and stay connected to Lehigh through the Alumni Club of Boston and the Young Alumni Council (YAC). Outside of work, I keep busy with mountain biking, surfing, searching for deals on Facebook Marketplace, and overall having micro-adventures.



How have you used the skills/knowledge from being on the OFYE team?

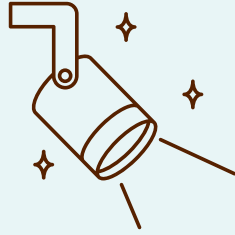
One of the biggest takeaways from my time as both an Orientation Leader and Coordinator was the ability to communicate effectively with first-years, fellow OLs, and the leaders I was coordinating. That skill has been invaluable in my personal and professional life. As an engineer, I work with peers, contractors, and outside stakeholders daily, and clear communication is everything. It's become even more important as I've had the opportunity to work overseas in Asia, navigating cultural and language barriers in ways I never anticipated. Being a confident, adaptable communicator is something I leverage every single day, and I trace a lot of that confidence back to my time on the OFYE team.

What's one piece of advice you have for current OFYE staff?

My biggest piece of advice is to embrace what Lehigh called "breadth and depth." Don't let your major or career path be the ceiling of what you explore. I'm a mechanical engineer, so engineering was the obvious career path, but some of my most valuable experiences have come from stepping outside that lane entirely. A Lehigh alum I work with got me into videography as he built his own business around it, from which I have learned so much, including learning how to use Linux. I taught myself machine embroidery from scratch and turned it into something I'm genuinely passionate about. Those kinds of pursuits broaden your perspective, keep different parts of your brain active, and open doors and conversations you never would have had otherwise. Stay curious beyond your comfort zone.

OL SPOTLIGHT

Past & Present



Ryan Rust '28



Why did you choose to join the OFYE?

I grew up wearing Lehigh shirts and sweatshirts, so when Lehigh accepted me, it was a dream come true. I was overwhelmed with excitement; however, after the initial thrill of getting to campus, I quickly became nervous about being away from the familiar comforts of home and the network of friends and family I had built my whole life. Then I met my Orientation Leader, who made my first week at this school feel like home and was a comforting, constant resource on campus. When she suggested I join the staff, I did not hesitate to apply. Through the application process, the OFYE already felt like a community on campus worth being part of. I knew that being able to support the organization that had given me a place on campus would grant me a rewarding experience: the chance to give back to the school of my dreams.

What are you looking forward to in your role?

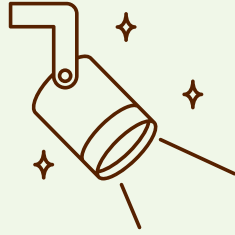
The thing I am most looking forward to as a returning staff member is building a brand-new community at the OFYE. I remember my first year on staff looking up to returners as role models both inside and outside OFYE events, so I aim to continue that tradition by being a campus role model and representing the organization's beliefs well. Also, I look forward to building deeper relationships with my other returners. The OFYE is such a unique and thoughtful community, and I cannot wait to create a welcoming and supportive environment for first-year students like the one the OFYE gave me.

What have you learned so far? What are you excited to continue learning?

Through being on staff, I have learned how to build real lasting connections, become a leader, and gain confidence in my ability to facilitate discussion. That is just the surface of what the OFYE teaches you. It gives you an experience not found in many other places on campus. The ability to be a peer leader and resource for many first years on campus. You also learn how to treat individuals with more compassion. You also go through training to better understand yourself and recognize that everyone brings a unique quality to the table. That diverse uniqueness is what makes staff special. I am excited to continue learning about our campus community and to improve my leadership and public speaking so I can continue to share the lessons the OFYE has taught me with the new first-years.

CHC SPOTLIGHT

Past & Present



Sethu Sethulakshmi '28

Why did you choose to join the OFYE?

As an international student, transitioning from international orientation to first-year orientation was a lot. I went from a more tight-knit community to suddenly seeing everyone at the school, and at that time, it felt like I could no longer see many of my international buddies. Joining OFYE is my way of representing the international community and being there for students who might feel that same way in the beginning.

Additionally, I had many friends in OFYE who would rave about the community and the entire experience. Having been part of it for the last few weeks, I've definitely seen that to be true. It is truly one of the most inclusive and chill communities on campus, and I am grateful to be part of this group of leaders and friends.

What are you looking forward to in your role?

As a Camp Hawk counselor, I am most looking forward to creating fun experiences for the first-years during camp, including playing team-building activities and serving as a mentor to them after they've experienced the first few weeks of college, which can be a very formative time.

I also fondly remember Camp Hawk being a special few days for me, as I learned more about my new environment and met people I am still friends with today. I'm excited to recreate that experience for future first-years. I'm also super excited to work with the awesome OFYE team, including fellow Camp Hawk counselors and OLs.

What have you learned so far? What are you excited to continue learning?

So far, I have learned the importance of language at Lehigh, especially when it comes to explaining what it means to be a leader among first-years. I'm excited to continue learning how I can set an example for incoming students and how to create the best first impression of Lehigh possible, so they feel empowered to be themselves in a new environment away from home.



2025 Camp Hawk Counselors: Lilibeth Delgado, Sydney Stevenson, Evy Wilkinson, Christopher Blake, Yahfrelyn Alvarado, Lily Paschke, Irene Kim, Ava Iovino,



We are elated to share that campers enjoyed a beautiful weekend at Camp Hawk this year! We had 58 campers who got to explore Camp Canadensis with our 8 stellar Camp Hawk Counselors. Iron Hawk saw its 15th year with 4 color teams competing for the honorable title of Iron Hawk Champions. This year, students participated in a fierce game of “Glow Tag”, ventured out canoeing on the lake, and supported each other by sharing resources their peers could take advantage of to accomplish their goals.

We asked campers to reflect on their Camp Hawk Counselors, and one student said “They were fun, welcoming, and made me feel both safe and heard, while also having a great time!” You know we couldn’t be happier to hear that along with messages of gratitude for getting off campus and the incredible atmosphere in the Poconos and with good people. This team of 8 worked hard for months to be prepared to facilitate great discussion, create a comfortable environment, and share resources that would help first-year students.



This year, the program got a fresh new look with an updated schedule and all-new activities. At the first meeting, students broke the ice with “Minute to Win It” games and speed friending, quickly getting to know one another. They then visited the Lehigh University Art Gallery, where they explored creative expression through collaging, and built meaningful connections. Along the way, they tested their knowledge of Bethlehem with trivia and enjoyed a “Taste of South Bethlehem” evening, sampling a variety of local favorites. The experience wrapped up with ice-skating and the always-entertaining “Paper Plate Awards,” a fun reminder of just how strong their bonds had become.



LEHIGH UNIVERSITY PRECLUSION

10 PROGRAMS

- Bridges to Bethlehem
- C.L.I.M.B.
- CSB Connect
- Discover Lehigh
- Fabricate:LU
- GlobaLehigh
- Leadership Adventures
- Lehigh 360
- LehighMED
- Lehigh Women Engineers

232
STUDENT
PARTICIPANTS

↑
16%
from 2024

97%
made a
connection
with their
peers

99%
would
recommend
the program
to their peers

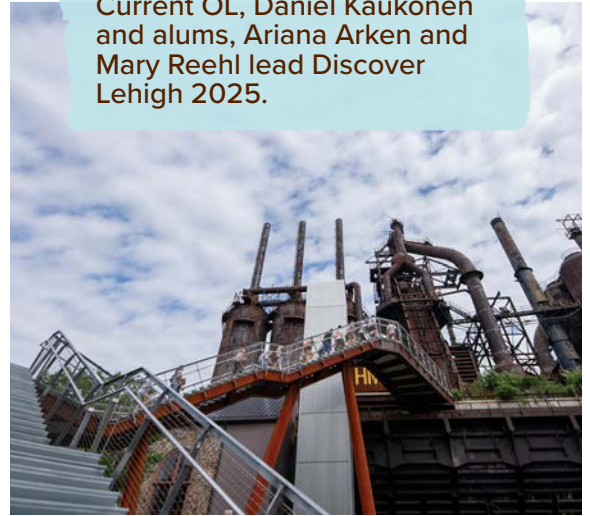
\$345
AVERAGE COST
TO ATTEND

43
students
received
funding

\$ 13,340
total support was provided

↑ 38% increase from
2024

Current OL, Daniel Kaukonen and alums, Ariana Arken and Mary Reehl lead Discover Lehigh 2025.



Bridges to Bethlehem (Formerly VE)

YEAR2@LU

Year2@LU Highlights

This fall, the Year2@LU team encouraged students to “Grow Into Year 2” at the annual Kick-Off! Sophomores engaged with on-campus resource tables, and reflected on the 5 Foundations in a deeper way.

We also hosted the Off-Campus Housing and Safety Workshop to educate students about the process of moving off-campus as an upperclassmen. Representatives from LUPD, Housing Services, and Financial Aid offered invaluable resources and tips for navigating the process successfully.

Spring Series

This year, we will be hosting some classic spring programs for our sophomore students. Sophomores were invited to join us in Camp Hawk: Snowed In if they were looking to make new, meaningful connections with others. We’ll end the year with our annual “Halfway There Celebration” to mark the milestone to commencement. We’re proud of how we’ve expanded our offerings to support students through their first couple of years on campus intentionally.

Themed Community

We are excited to announce that a Year2@LU Themed Community is in the works for the 2026-2027 academic year! This themed community will offer sophomores a space to feel connected, try new things, and grow alongside other second-year students with a focus on developing leadership skills. More to come!



Many thanks goes to Tyler Schmid, Ryan Rust and Sethu Sethulakshmi for their contributions!



CONNECT WITH US!

Keep the Orientation and Camp Hawk magic with you year-round by following us on Instagram and TikTok and joining our LinkedIn Group!

 @LehighOFYE

 @LehighOFYE

 Office of First-Year Experience - Lehigh University

If you would like to be featured in the next OL, or CHC spotlight, please email Nicole Burke at nmb518@lehigh.edu!

