“When I participate in orientation as a leader, we are continuing one of the great Hope traditions and passing on our love of Hope College to the new students,” she adds.

When students arrive on campus, they check into their respective residence hall and begin unloading their belongings. First-year students Kalli Shades, of Cannon Falls, Minn., and Lauren Ferrin, of Saline, Mich., are settling into their new room in Scott Hall. Although they had not yet met in person, the two had begun communicating earlier this summer through Facebook, the social networking site, when they found they were going to be roommates.

“We’d message each other about what we’re going to bring, how we wanted to set up our room, which colors (we wanted to design),” Ferrin said.

Both say they felt welcomed immediately when they arrived on campus. “Right away, everyone introduced themselves to us, so we didn’t feel out of place,” Shades said.

During the first day, new students begin to connect with each other, attending a pizza dinner and attending their first residence hall meeting.

The next morning, students gather in the DeVos Center for a seminar on deciding on a major and choosing a career direction, a discussion that is led by representatives from the Crossroads Project and Hope’s Career Center. Academic interest sessions are held for students thinking about careers in education, pre-law, health, nursing, engineering and the arts.

“We are trying to set the tone right away (of what our expectations are), so there’s not a lot of confusion as to why they’re here,” Dr. Frost said.

In the early afternoon, students meet with their orientation assistants – usually two assistants for each team of about 10 incoming students. Bakken and Romero are working together and have their group meet in the Pine Grove area, between VanderVlist Hall and the Schaap Science Center. Bakken and Romero each wear #11 on their T-shirts, signaling their group number, so that students can easily locate them.

The group plays several games, including one in which each of the students takes a colored Skittle candy and describes something about themselves. For example, if a student is handed a red Skittle, he or she has to describe something they’re passionate about. The students also talk about what community means to them, and the assistants also talk about the significance of community in the life of Hope.

“You’re going to notice that it’s a very bonded community,” Romero tells students. “It’s up to you to create the community you want.”

The assistants also address some heavier issues, such as Hope’s policy on alcohol, during the three-hour group session. Afterward, it’s on to the First-Year Seminar Class, where students meet their academic advisors for the first time.

Later, it’s on to the Dow Center for Haylian, a series of interactive games designed to get students to know each other, followed by a lunch in birch-bark hats at the DeVos Art Center.

“You get them out there and helps them meet new people,” Romero said. “It keeps them aware that there’s stuff to do, and not just hang out in your room.”

Sunday begins the first worship service at Dimnent Chapel, followed by the opening convocation at DeVos Fieldhouse. Sam Estochen says he was hooked on Hope’s chapel program very quickly.

“It reminds me of my youth group (from high school), with the worship band,” Estochen said. “It’s a great feeling.”

On Monday, students meet with their advisors individually and discuss their classes. They also can attend a job fair at the Dow Center to learn about on-campus employment. That night, there’s an activity fair where students can learn about serving in student government or get involved in a particular organization.

“At college, you need to be a participant in the life of the college from day one,” Dr. Frost said. “We don’t expect you to be a spectator, but an engaged member of our community.”

Sam Estochen credits orientation for helping him adjust quickly to life as a college student. “I know a lot more people than I would have at this point had I not gone through it,” he said.