Ball State University - Virtual Case Study

From Surviving to Thriving

Danny Butler, Lauren Locante, & Bradford Peace

Meet the Team!

Bradford Peace- Student Program Director
Schedule and Facilities
Committee Chair

Lauren Locante - Assistant Director
Assessment and Research
Committee Chair

Danny Butler - Residence Hall Director
Energy Management
Committee Chair

The RA Role

As a student professional, an RA is expected to wear many hats. Their relationship to one individual student can change several times over the course of a single week. Our overarching goal is to equip our RA staff to feel comfortable and confident transitioning between these roles in any given situation over the course of the year.

Friend

Informal Counselor

Confidant

Rule Enforcer

Conflict Mediator

Health and Safety Inspector

Tour Guide

Advisor

Administrator

Academic Promoter

Academic Interventionist

Liaison

Agent of the State University

Representative

Role Model

Programmer

Koch (2016)

RA Training Objectives

Equip

Equip RAs with the skills and knowledge to perform confidently in all aspects of their job

Engage

Engage RAs throughout the course of training, encouraging various methods of continuous participation

Extend

Extend training beyond just what RAs need to survive the first few weeks of the semester, providing structured ongoing training to help them thrive.

The Points System

The purpose of this short introductory session is to introduce an incentive-based engagement model to keep RAs actively participating throughout training. The competition rewards a variety of active and passive demonstrations of engagement and critical thinking and application. Points are awarded individually or by team, and will be counted collectively amongst hall staff team. The winning staff will obtain ownership of a HRL trophy until next year's training.

25%
Assessment for Programs

RA Teams will gain points for each post-session assessment they fill out.

- Gives universities essential feedback in shaping programs
- Creates buy-in for students to fill out assessment

25%
Daily Icebreakers

Each day, a RA team is responsible for designating one person to participate in the early morning ice breaker. Based off of placement, their team will win certain amounts of points

- Builds high energy early in the morning
- Creates team comradery which is essential to a successful team
- Losing teams are more motivated to make up points in the afternoon

50%
Team Participation

Presenters award points based on residence hall participation. From asking questions to volunteering thoughtful ideas during discussion, this will encourage an increase in healthy dialogue.

- More dialogue during discussions
- More opportunities for questions to be asked pertaining to the job
- Increase in overall engagement

How to Live Where You Work

The Fishbowl Effect

The first part of this session would talk briefly about the higher standard RAs have in their day-to-day actions. It would encourage RAs to recognize that their residents, colleagues, and supervisors are aware of what goes on, even when they are "off the clock."

Personal vs. Professional

Another struggle of RAs is that their personal lives often become professional issues brought to the attention of supervisors and other staff. This session would give RAs the tools to differentiate between personal and professional conflict and help them answer the question, "what do I need to work effectively with this member of my team?"

Conflict Resolution

Finally, once causes of staff conflict have been addressed, RAs will engage in discussion about best practices for overcoming these conflicts. Hall staffs will have the opportunity to work amongst themselves to develop expectations of each other regarding potential conflict resolution that might be necessary over the year.

Session 3

Recognizing Unconscious Bias

1 Affinity Bias[1]

How to avoid only connecting with residents who have similar interests, likes, geographical location, values, and characteristics

2 Conformity Bias

How to stay neutral in mediating a conflict when one side of the argument aligns with personal values or opinions

3 Confirmation Bias

How to continue to connect with residents after documentation and still make them feel like a valued member of the community

1 http://www.diversityjournal.com/13763-affinity-bias-conundrum-illusion-inclusion-part-iii/

RA Resources Fair

- Meet & Greet with Departments/Campus Resources (Counseling Center, Tutoring Center, Academic Advising, Rec. Center etc.)

- Build individual connections & have organic conversations with campus professionals

- Returners can walk with new people to network and explain connections to departments

- RAs will each be given a worksheet requiring an answer to a prompt and a stamp from each campus resource at the fair

It's important for RAs to be familiar with campus resources that could potentially help their students. But session after session is time-consuming and often unengaging. This model would allow RAs to travel through the resources at their own pace, to stay active, and to engage one on one with representatives from each office.

Offices such as Title IX and University Police will still have their own individual sessions, as those presentations are full of content knowledge regarding policy and much more sensitive information.

RA Returner Panel

PURPOSE

To provide returner RAs with an opportunity to channel their experience in a productive way and become leaders within the team, instead of remaining bored and disengaged throughout training.

To provide first time RAs with an opportunity to forge bonds with their returning peers as mentors and to allow them to ask questions they may not feel comfortable asking in front of professional staff.

FORMAT/DETAILS

This should be planned and executed exclusively by returner RAs. Housing professional staff and/or a training committee's only role should be delegating and supporting, if necessary.

This session will take place as a question/answer panel between returner and first time RAs. Professional staff and leadership should not be present during this session.

Intentional Programming

Delivery Method
- Definition of ABCD's and why they are important
- Small group creative brainstorming of programs for specific spaces

Asset Based Community Development

What do you excel at? Whether it is cooking, weight lifting, or pokemon training, everyone has an area of strength

+

Creative Door Decorations

Based on intentional RA conversations, RA's can develop personalized door decs

→

Strong Community Bond

Residents can visibly see what peers assets are allowing for more community connections based on interests.

Utilizing Spaces

How present are RA's in different spaces within the residence halls?

+

Creative Programming

Tailored to LLC's, or academic needs, what ways can an RA program to the needs of the community?

→

Better Interpersonal Connections

By engaging in tailored programming in creative spaces, RA's can connect on a personal level without forcing conversations.

From Surviving to Thriving

◈ Online Modules for Continued Growth & Interaction

◈ Professional Development Activities During Staff Meetings

◈ "Burnout Out Buddies"/Mentorship through the year

◈ Tips on how to manage time/energy

Often times student staff training goes from zero to one hundred, and then back to zero once the school year starts. This session serves as an introduction to the semester long continuous training that will take place via online module. The session will include timelines, examples of sessions, and an emphasis on the importance of ongoing training.

Current Events Session

Content
This session would consistent primarily of discussing articles and current events in the higher education and housing and residence life realms. Examples of articles that would be discussed can be found on the right-hand side of this slide.

Format
This session should be conducted in a round table like format. A housing professional staff should be the facilitator, but should strive to direct the conversation as little as possible. Their main purpose is to keep conversation going and help make the connection between current events and their own RA practice.

Purpose
The purpose of this session is to help RAs understand their role in the greater context of housing and residence life. Outside of their hall, and their university, they are a piece of a bigger institution and serve an important role. If available, members housing leadership (not hall directors) should participate as peers in the round table discussion.

Homeless for the Holidays

Students struggle to find a place to live over winter break. Colleges and universities are trying to develop solutions, but they have been criticized for being insensitive to the homeless student population.

By Jeremy Bauer-Wolf   // January 15, 2019   0 COMMENTS

See Hate Speech, Leave It Up

Resident assistants at University of Michigan are worried about not being able to remove racist or other offensive language from dormitory doors. Officials say they can't suppress free expression.

By Jeremy Bauer-Wolf   // February 11, 2019   64 COMMENTS

Student Comes Home to Find Man Hiding in Her Closet

By Jeremy Bauer-Wolf   // February 6, 2019   2 COMMENTS

It seemed like the opening of a horror movie: a student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro couldn't find her belongings and discovered handprints on her bathroom wall. She believed she was being haunted.

Lewis Co

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/02/11/u-michigan-housing-officials-cant-remove-free-speech-dorm-doors
https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/02/06/student-comes-home-find-man-hiding-her-close
https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/01/15/homeless-college-students-struggle-find-lodging-food-over-winter-break

From Surviving to Thriving...cont.

RA Modules throughout the year would tackle a variety of topics:

- Current events on campus
- Balancing responsibility to residents and institution
- Self-care
- Decision-making during crisis

Modules and Learning Objectives

Module 1: The World Around Us
Create the foundation of a residential community through building relationships, facilitating connections, and applying customer service practices.

Module 2: Being an Agent of Your Institution
Learn about the policies and procedures that impact the RA role, explore the ethical decision making process, and understand the need to be a good team member and a responsible and valued member of the University community.

Module 3: Cool, Clear Head
Establish critical decision making abilities by integrating skills needed to evaluate and act on safety concerns, and strategies for responding to a variety of crisis/emergency situations.

Module 4: Self & Self-Care
Build awareness of the importance of self-care, develop strategies for time management and prioritization.

https://www.acuho-i.org/online-learning/courses-and-certificates/being-a-resident-assistant-101?portalid=0

Bronson U

Monday, November 4th, 2019

Community in Residence Ha

Due to the new training program implemented within Residence Life, Resident Assistants are more competent and excited than ever. The most recent assessment about resident experience reported the highest grades for community building, interpersonal relationships, and feeling of safety in the history of Bronson University.

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Thank You!

Any questions?

Please direct questions to lelocante@bsu.edu, bpeace@bsu.edu, or drbutler@bsu.edu

Ball State University- Bradford Peace, Lauren Locante, and Danny Butler

Introduction/Context

As student staff training is a busy and influential time in a staff member's career and college experience, we have devised a new method of implementing the content and creating an environment of enriching experiences to empower the student staff members to be successful as well as challenge their current skills to foster development.

In the case study, the goal to add more content to the training without extending the obligation for the staff members presents a challenge that pushes resources beyond what was previously required. To add more content to the trainings, we are proposing a model of "Flipped Learning" along with continuing learning modules and discussions. We believe that a hybrid of in-person and online content is a must to achieve the lofty goals of optimally training student staff members. According to Hollis and Was (2016), mind wandering in online learning is common and social media accounts for a significant portion of students' unrelated thoughts. In order to best use the modules, we believe the mixed learning method of requiring student engagement with content via the online platform outside of training hours and the discussions and activities related to the content during the training hours and subsequent staff meetings will unlock further potential for our students to develop the essential skills for the job as well as professional skills for other contexts.

Objectives for Training

The resident assistant (RA) role is a vital aspect of the Housing and Residence Life department as they contact the students in the halls daily. Koch (2016) describes the many hats an RA may be asked to be "informal counselors, friends, confidants, role models, programmers,

administrators, rule enforcers, and conflict mediators." (p. 81) Koch continues that the expanded roles an RA may serve are: "academic promoter, academic interventionist, agent of the state, advisor, mediator, tour guide, university representative, health and safety inspector, and liaison with university departments." (p. 82) In recognition of these diverse and challenging roles, student staff training must equip and engage the RAs to handle all roles well through the year and must also invoke a passion to extend the training beyond the formal summer training weeks to a daily venture throughout the academic year. To these ends, the sessions we have created are based in research for how to effectively and efficiently train the staff members to be successful as leaders and resources within the hall, in the classroom, and beyond using transferable skills.

Sessions

To open training, we would like to offer a bit of context, going over the objectives and goals, as well as welcoming everyone and hosting icebreaker and team-building activities. In addition, we have devised a point scheme to encourage teamwork and spirit through the trying and tiring couple of training weeks.

"How to live where you work" would address the nuances of the experience of living in a space where you are a leader and staff member. The group would discuss the Fishbowl Effect and its implications for how to act in public. We also would like to address the need to establish boundaries in relationships with residents by defining what is "personal" and what should be "professional." Finally, we would like to provide training and tips about how to best handle conflict as this is an intimidating and challenging part of the Resident Assistant position.

We would like to offer a "Bias Awareness" session as an opportunity to reflect on one's own bias and understand how this will influence the relationship and community-building

processes. Besides offering insights on recognizing and overcoming a handful of common cognitive biases, we would like to promote a space to discuss how bias affects the lives of staff members and strategies they have used to connect with people whom they may have initially stereotyped or had biased thoughts.

Another session we would like to prepare for the student staff training is a meet & greet with other campus stakeholders so the Resident Assistants can better and understand the resources available on campus and can remember who they are talking about and why that person is helpful for their role of supporting their residents. While presentations may be an effective option, we believe a meet & greet allows the RAs to have some autonomy in their learning as well as walk around in small groups to get to know their coworkers while being able to chat with the campus partners. Explicit outcomes from this session would be an increased understanding of how campus resources such as the Counseling Center, the Career Center, tutoring resources, and others play into the experience of students at the institution.

Next, we would like to help mitigate the presentation format of the training by offering a "Returning RA Panel" where new staff members have the opportunity to ask honest questions of their more experienced peers, and get some context and reassurance that their concerns and foreseeable challenges are valid and shared with others in the group. We believe this session would also help alleviate the repetitiveness that is characteristic of returner Resident Assistants second time through training, and help to establish their role as valued leaders among the team.

We want to provide training in an incredibly important area of community development. While this is different for every community, "Asset-Based Community Development" can help RAs recognize the salient components that others want within the community and build

connections based on interests, passions, goals, and strengths. The skills and discussions from this training will transferable to and applicable for all communities on campus and even at other institutions. This session would include other strategies for Resident Assistants to look beyond surface level programming and interactions and strive for the next level.

To close the RA training, we want to reiterate the importance of ongoing training and empower our student staff to not only be competent in the job, but excel. One of the challenges with a concentrated training for the RAs is balancing information overload and separating out the information that will enable them to survive hall opening, move in, and the first few weeks of class. To combat this, we would like to implement an app, available on phone and computer, which would provide continuing learning modules, featuring video presentations, infographics, and relevant links to campus resources, which RAs would complete throughout the year. These modules can encourage continued growth and serve as a content backbone to assist RAs who need more time with the material, helping them to not only survive, but thrive in the RA position.

Conclusion

The goal of leaving training with a holistically prepared, and empowered student staff is the central focus of these sessions and the focus on development throughout the year underscores the intentionality of our staff to support and challenge the students further. Each session was specifically chosen from experience and content that we believe will allow the RAs to be successful in their own growth while strengthening community and helping their residents through the trials and joys of their collegiate experience. We believe the extension of these topics above the standard RA training materials will create more enriching conversation and better prepare the RAs to be aspirationally successfully throughout the year.

References

Hollis, R. B., Was, C. A., Mind wandering, control failures, and social media distractions in online learning, *Learning and Instruction*, *42,* 2016, p.104-112, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.01.007.

Koch, Virginia Albaneso. "Current Practices in Resident Assistant Training." *The Journal of college and university student housing.* 42.3 (2016): n. pag. Print.