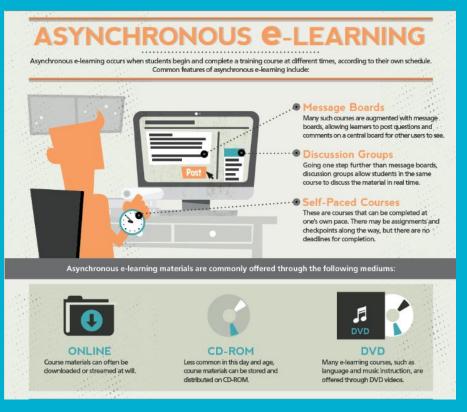
Bronson University RA Training: Topics & Their Effectiveness

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Asynchronous Approach

While Asynchronous e-learning is becoming more and more popular as a means for administering education and training, we believe that there should be a limit to how it is used in regards to RA training. Namely, these modules should set the foundation for in-person trainings.



Pros & Cons of an Asynchronous Approach

Pros

Cons

- Cost effective
- Online Modules would create a "Digital Database" of RA Training materials for easy access and referencing
- Edwards (2009) noted that asynchronous e-learning "maximizes flexibility in timing and access for the learner by allowing learner control of pace, schedule, and location"
- Asynchronous e-learning can incorporate more interactive and live content ex: multimedia content, videos of examples, lectures, and demos, as well as integration of note-taking and/or blogging characteristics.

- No chance to evaluate or assess learning in real time
- Students kipping through modules
- "flaming" in communication (Dix, Finlay, Abowd, & Beale, 2003)

Setting the stage for the Asynchronous Approach

In order to successfully implement online-modules via the asynchronous approach we believe they would need to be:

- Scaffolded → The most basic and comprehensible aspects of RA training would be included in online modules leaving the more complex subjects to be instructed in person.
 - Basic information needed to understand topics such as mental health, neurodiversity and Campus Judicial Procedures, for example, could be included in the online modules to help better facilitate and prepare RA's for in-person trainings.
- Evaluated
 → A chance for evaluation and assessment in real life would need to occur in order to ensure the "online" delivery method was effective.
- **Gradually Transitioned** → Transitioning to e-learning methods needs to be gradual, it would not be effective or wise to shift RA trainings to 100% asynchronous, online modules in the first year
- **Critical mass of users**→ Any successful collaborative system needs to be adopted by a critical mass of users (Grudin, 1994) For some of the more hesitant RAs more time or effort may need to be spent in showing them the usefulness of this approach to ensure all RAs are supportive of online modules.

Turning Down the Firehose: Why Modules?

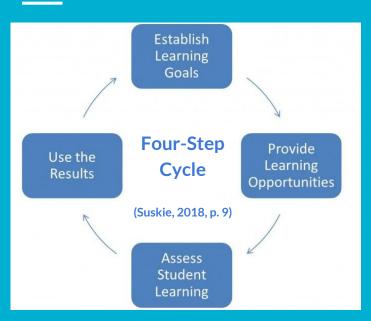
Pre-service training can feel like a firehose of information for RAs. Institutions often use online training modules to reduce costs, create time for more critical in-person topics, & limit the amount of poorly received presentations (Koch, 2012). Implementing online training at Bronson University can:

- Provide the "why" to prepare for in-person training
 - "When tying learning outcomes to training and experiential activities, the RA is better equipped to understand the complexities of their development and complicated nature of their position" (Rich, Early, & Whisler, 2016)
- Provide a foundation to build upon
 - Cover topics that are straight forward / protocol based
 - Allows for an introduction to new student staff and a review for returning student staff
 - o Information will be utilized during in-person RA training



Image from @marklewismd Twitter

Assessment & Evaluation



"The cries for assessment have never been louder in higher education" (Barber, 2015).

- Why: Determine the impact of training modules on RAs
 - Ensure RAs are learning from the various training models utilized (e.g. online, pre-service, & in-service)
 - Gain feedback on strengths & areas of improvement from student staff undergoing the training
- How: Three-Step Process
 - **1.** Utilize post-training survey information from previous Fall to evaluate topics (Astin's I-E-O Model)
 - **2.** Interview current/past RA staff to assess current effectiveness & field thoughts on online modules
 - **3.** Create a survey to assess the effectiveness of online Summer training (Suskie's Four-Step Cycle)

Potential Topics for Online Modules

- Overview of Residence Life / Housing Model
- Administrative Tasks & Paperwork
- Campus Judicial Procedures
- FERPA
- Title IX Basics
- Mental Health
- Suicide Ideation (e.g. Gatekeeper Training)
- Neurodiversity
- Campus Resources

Overview of Res Life / Housing



Resident Assistant Rap from Marywood University

- Way for staff to get a sense of their role beyond the contract/their experience living on campus
 - Including Residence Life/Housing organization chart, professional staff, types of residence halls/Living Learning Communities (LLCs), residential foundations/learning outcomes
- "A Day in the Life of a Bronson U RA"
 - Get students excited/add humor by including articles and video links
 - Use current student staff to <u>create a video</u> promoting their "whys"

Administrative Tasks & Paperwork

This area is listed as an essential training topic for Bronson University, and for good reasons. Characterized in Koch's (2012) analysis as a "safety and security" measure (p. 68), an overview of this topic would make for an excellent online module:

- Allow for more in-depth understanding that in-person sessions might
- Self-paced nature provide students the opportunity to take notes or review as needed (Brown, 2017)
- Opportunity to practice (e.g. incident report, duty log) before implementing in person with peers/professionals

After the online training, this area would be integrated into various

- Individual hall staff break-out sessions with supervisors
- Discussions in major areas (e.g. judicial procedures, safety/crisis management, intentional/difficult conversations with residents)

Higher Education Law

Due to the rising complexities within the intersection of law and housing, it is pertinent that RA staff "have a working knowledge of the legal implications associated with their role and the services campus housing provides" (Nguyen, Collier, Watts, Cartwright, & King-Kostelac, 2018, p. 128).

- Law affect all institutions: <u>FERPA</u>, <u>Clery Act</u>, <u>Title IX</u>
- Law differ (by state & institution type): <u>Search & Seizure</u>

In-person sessions build upon this overview through application

- Clery Act, Search & Seizure: "Behind Closed Doors" (Practical Simulations)
- Title IX: Sexual Assault & Harassment

Campus Judicial Procedures

According to Koch (2012), "the topic delivered most often using online training was institutional policies" (p. 84), as every institution--no matter the type or size--has procedures (state policies can also be included for public institutions).

- Collaboration with Bronson University Police Department (BUPD)
- Focus on institutional policy RAs should understand
- Incident Report writing by <u>creating</u> or <u>using</u> a video scenario

In-person follow-up could be more individualized & personal

- First one-to-one with supervisor = review of IR
- Meal with BUPD (humanize law enforcement & allow RAs ask specific questions they may otherwise be intimidated to ask)



TCNJ Campus Police DA Training
Video

Mental Health Online Module

- Required for RAs to complete prior to in-person training.
- Module will address:
- Suicide statistics
- Risk factors that may stimulate suicide (i.e. inability to cope with stress, anxiety and depression).
- Stone et al. (2005) reported that individuals participating in online workshops developed by the U.S. National Center for Suicide Prevention Training showed consistent improvements in their knowledge of suicide and positively rated their educational experience (Krysinska & De Leo, 2007).

Suicide Ideation (e.g. Gatekeeper Training)

• Increase participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills regarding suicide prevention so that they can refer at-risk individuals for help.

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)

- Gatekeeper training often used with resident advisors on college campuses that teaches participants how to identify warning signs, examine suicidal intentions, listen to student issues, and refer distressed students for help.
- Cascamo (2013) examined the effect of a one-hour QPR training on participants' attitudes toward mental health services. Results showed that there was an increase in participants' attitudes toward help-seeking individuals (Zatko,, 2018).

How does QPR work?

- 1-2 hour suicide prevention program that incorporates the following:
 - **Lecture:** Participants are given facts about suicide, misconceptions about suicide and suicide prevention, warning signs of suicide, and gatekeeper skills.
 - **Video:** After the lecture, participants watch a video that shows interviews with people who had personal experiences with suicide, such as a loss of a loved one due to suicide.
 - Participants are given an overview book that addresses factual information about suicide related issues and gatekeeper skills that were discussed in the presentation as well as referral cards to help participants recall the suicide-specific gatekeeper skills they learned during the training (Zatko, 2018).

Neurodiversity

High functioning students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may undergo more difficulty adjusting to residence life:

- Developing peer relationships, adjusting to shared living arrangements, managing the organizational aspects of independent living, and coping with complex sensory issues further complicate the residential living experience for students on the autism spectrum.
- These complications can lead to roommate conflicts, anxiety, isolation, and college dropout (Ackles, Fields, Skinner, 2013).

Neurodiversity Awareness Training

Online:

Module could address the following:

- Characteristics of ASD (i.e. what ASD might "look" like)
- Strengths and challenges that this population brings to the campus community.
- Statistics (the general U.S. population of 18-24 year olds who identify themselves on the Autism Spectrum).
- RAs must complete online module prior to in-person training. Modules could last between 30-45 minutes.

In-Person:

- 1 hour training delivered by campus disability experts:
- These experts could provide 3 20 min small-group sessions, with campus disability experts facilitating discussions of possible student situations or case studies, allow residence life and housing staff to gain insight into the unique needs of these students.

RA Programming

We believe Programming and campus resources could be done as an In-Person Training in the style of a conference to include a resource fair.

- Q&A Panel: Between senior RA's and new staff
- <u>Tableing</u>: Much like you would have vendor tables at a conference, Offices from around campus (e.g. Financial Aid, Diversity Office, Student Leadership Development, Health Promotions, etc.) would have resources available for RAs
- <u>Display Poster</u>: Formatted like a poster competition--provides an opportunity for current RAs to exhibit strategies they have used (e.g. program ideas, bulletin boards, community gathering topics)
- Roundtable Discussion: More informal conversations could be facilitated.

Continuing Education Sessions

- Opportunities throughout the year to continue learning
 - Keeps Fall training short
 - Distributed practices = high impact on student mastery (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham, 2013)
- Topics not critical for training but still important/interesting to consider for continuing education sessions
 - Social Media & Advertising: Creating Community
 - Living where you Work: Balancing the job & life
 - Active Shooter Training
 - Fire Safety
 - Nontraditional/Veteran students
- Consider: Incentives to motivate students to participate in these sessions

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Case Study Narrative:

Major Points to Support Asynchronous RA Training at Bronson University

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During our work creating this presentation, we recognized major points that would not be as applicable for the slides themselves, but still important in addressing the topics at hand. This paper provides those points, broken into the slides and subject matter covered in the presentation.

Slide 2 - Asynchronous Approach

The results of an asynchronous approach provide insights for important interaction design and development issues in e-learning such as note-taking and annotations on e-learning content, student comprehension and satisfaction, skipping courses, cost-effective educational and time management, social awareness, collaboration, "flaming," and "border-crossing." The study reports on issues that need to be considered by human–computer interaction researchers, interaction design practitioners, and usability professionals and are complementary to usability and accessibility work in e-learning evaluation studies.

Slide 3 - Pros & Cons of an Asynchronous Approach

"Flaming in written communication occurs when people fail to express emotions in text due to the medium's constraints in this respect: Written communication does not allow for back channels (e.g., tone of voice, body language, and gestures are not present) that convey the affective aspects of communication" n (Dix, Finlay, Abowd, & Beale, 2003).

Slide 5-Turning Down the Firehose: Why Modules?

Most RA training lasts between seven to 20 days (Rich, Early, & Whisler, 2016) which is some RAs find is already too long; as the world evolves, so does the RA role and training. Utilizing online modules over the summer supplements the need for new topics while satisfying the needs of student staff. Modules serve both new RAs (overview; get a sense of their role; not coming into training blind) and returning RAs (refresher of topics they may already mastered).

Slide 6-Assessment & Evaluation

Step 1: utilizing any feedback collected after the most recent RA training, utilize Astin's I-E-O Model to recognize if learning goals were met (Barber, 2015); if no data exists, address why and how to ensure this does not occur in the future. Step 2: Create spaces where interviews can be conducted with RA focus groups to address their ideas on the current model and test how new methods may be received; provide incentives (money, food, swag) to motivate participation (Suskie, 2018). Step 3: Discuss learning outcomes and address how to measure them while creating new curriculum; follow the four-step cycle to ensure every part of assessment & evaluation is considered when creating and implementing this model (Suskie, 2018).

Slide 7 - Potential Topics for Online Modules

Certain "essential training topics" could be great online modules due to their straight-forward nature (e.g. law, paperwork). Topics not currently covered cold be introduced first through online modules and then brought into in-person sessions (e.g. mental health, neurodiversity)

Slide 8 - Overview of Res Life/Housing

No matter the type or size of institution, this basic information on the structure of the housing department is unique to Bronson University & essential for student staff to better understand their roles. Returning staff can be updated on any changes in personnel or policy while new staff can be introduced to the nuances of the position beyond their pre-perceptions or past experiences. Videos provide a great way to deliver information and can be referred to throughout the year for clarification or for staff excused from training/brought in mid-year

Slide 9 - Administrative Tasks & Paperwork

While one of the more "boring" topics, administrative tasks and paperwork are essential for every level of work the RA does; implementing as an online module will provide staff the opportunity to engage with this critical information in a way that best serves their understanding

and experiences (e.g. first year versus returner, apartment style versus traditional hall).

Information here will manifest in individual staff sessions (e.g. what a duty log looks like for that specific building style/LLC) and in other training topics (e.g. incident report with policy violations, documenting responses to intentional conversations/programming efforts)

Slide 10 - Higher Education Law

Nguyen, Collier, Watts, Cartwright, and King-Kostelac (2018) point out that "housing staff, specifically resident assistants, who typically are first responders to incidents in the housing complex, are required to document via incident reports that allow easy retrieval for reporting purposes. Failure to document report and provide accurate information not only will create a false sense of security for on-campus residents and their guests, but also introduce liability issues should preventable incidents occur." (p.132). Law implementation will differ based on institution type and state policy, but is critical for RAs to understand, as it forms the basis for safety and security and student concerns they must handle

Slide 11 - Campus Judicial Procedures

Like Higher Education law, it is pertinent that students understand institution specific protocol, Involving BUPD in creative ways will remove any intimidation RAs may have toward law enforcement while allowing time to be allocated toward another topic (e.g. managing conflict). Allowing RAs to practice incident report writing will help them master the skill and provide individual supervisors a sense of focus when staff arrives on campus.

Slide 12 - Mental Health Online Module

UC Berkeley offers a 30 minute online suicide prevention training for students- can also provide online training for the same amount of time to RAs (Provide suicide-prevention training to staff, students, 2009).

Slide 13 - Gatekeeper Training

Gatekeeper training programs have generally found improvements in one or more of the following: attitudes, knowledge, intentions to help, and crisis communications skills (Taub, et al, 2013). The benefit of students attending gatekeeper training after they watch the module is that they already acquire basic knowledge of suicide statistics and how to go about preventing these behaviors from occurring within their own residents.

Slide 14 - How does QPR work?

Psychologist from the counseling center can provide QPR training to Ras. RAs can refer to overview books and referral cards throughout the academic year as needed when dealing with students at risk for suicide.

Slide 16 – Neurodiversity Awareness Training

The benefits of this training are to prevent misconceptions about autism, build a campus culture of acceptance, and allow the campus community to be sensitive to ASD issues overall (Ackles, Fields, Skinner, 2013). Examples of discussion questions include: The residence halls provide a unique environment, which fosters social interactions and social development with its residents. How might residence life provide support to encourage healthy social development for students with ASD? Students with ASD may not understand the social norms or acceptable behavior outlined by residence life policy. How might a student with ASD be treated if their behavior is in violation of such policies? If the treatment is the same as that of their peers, what support could be provided for ASD students? (Ackles, Fields & Skinner, 2013). Through small group discussion, participants can brainstorm appropriate ways to respond to and address ASD-specific behaviors (Ackles, Fields & Skinner, 2013).

Slide 17 – RA Programming

Taking an innovative approach to in-person sessions can add value to training and prevent burn out through a variety of different session types. Online topics can be addressed in less formal ways while inspiring RAs to be creative within their roles.

Slide 18 - Continuing Education Sessions

Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham (2013) found that distributed practices have a high-impact practice to student mastery. By spreading activities out over time, students have a better chance to retain this information and implement it. While this research is often used in a formal education setting, it can also be applied to sequencing RA training throughout the academic year. These topics can be brought to conferences for staff members looking for professional development or involve student staff interested in student affairs. "Continuing education" sessions can be incentivized (monetary, swag, food, leadership roles) to motivate RA staff to participate.

Summary

Ultimately, utilizing an online, asynchronous model will save valuable in-person time. Scaffolding will allow RAs to consider the longevity of the information, allowing them to see how various parts of the position build upon one another and understand the why behind various procedures and policies. Through creating digital resources, Bronson University will also help create a digital database that can be used not only for review, but to help educate staff that could not be at training or are hired mid-year and assist in future training efforts.

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