



Hot Topics in Higher Ed: RA Edition

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Outline

- Overview of Training Topics
 - Description of Completing the Trainings
 - Example Training One: Identity
 - Identity Sub-Topic: Cultural Competence
 - Example Training Two: Free Speech
 - Free Speech Sub-Topic: Supporting Offended Students and Protecting Students' Free Speech Rights
 - Example Three: Crisis Response
 - Crisis Response Sub-Topic: Red Flags
 - References
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Training Modules

- Identity Module
 - Free Speech Module
 - Crisis Response Module
 - Wellness Module
 - Administrative Module
 - Customer Service Module
 - Technology and Boundaries Module
 - Campus Resources Module
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Completing the Modules

For each of the 8 Training Modules, there are 5 sub-topics. The Resident Advisors (RAs) will complete 3 of the sub-topics of their choosing during the first 2 weeks of the semester. RAs can complete the topics in any order they choose, so long as they complete at least 3 of the sub-topics from each module. Additionally, RAs can complete the remaining sub-topics as they desire, or supervisors can assign sub-topic completion for accountability measures.



Identity Module

- Race and Ethnicity
 - Sexuality and Gender
 - Visible and Invisible Disabilities
 - On the spectrum
 - **Cultural Competence**
 - Socioeconomic Status
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Cultural Competence

Sustained Communication

The first subsection is Sustained Communication that encourages *listening* and *questioning across lines of differences*.

Example: Would provide ways to create programs that will encourage RA's to create open dialogue.

- Have residents share the meaning behind name (meaning behind first name, middle name, family last name, cultural ties)
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Cultural Competence

Critical Social Awareness

Second, the Critical Social Awareness subsection will use *political realities*, develop a *shared vocabulary* to help guide the conversation.

Example: when RAs begin to question and explore the self-segregation of residents

- Prompt RA to consider what informs their perceptions of others and their behaviors
 - Reflection and possible reasons behind behaviors
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Cultural Competence

Bridge Building

Bridge Building, allows RAs to see connections and disconnections between groups. These connections will help build cultural competence when working with residents.

Example: RA will be prompted to select from an interactive video multiple privileges and cultural connections

- When a white female student acknowledges her own salient privileges, willingness to learning and show empathy towards others.
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“Freedom of speech is a fundamental American freedom and a human right, and there’s no place that this right should be more valued and protected than America’s colleges and universities.”

-FIRE

Free Speech Module Topics

- Public vs Private Institutions
 - Hate Speech and Protected Speech
 - Individual vs. Staff
 - Civic Engagement
 - **Supporting Offended Students and Protecting Students' Free Speech Rights**
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Free Speech Issues Intro

Free speech issues on campus can create turmoil in your residential community as you try to support students offended by the issue and protect the constitutional rights of all students. This module will provide guidance for you to accomplish both goals.

Supporting Students

- You can make statements against harmful uses of free speech and denouncing the actions/words of the individuals' causing the issue
 - You can provide resources, such as student counseling, to offended students to offer them emotional support
 - You can host educational programming around Social Justice and Diversity topics to educate those causing emotional harm on the impact of their words/actions
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Educating Students on Free Speech Rights

- You can host educational programs around raising awareness of the First Amendment and free speech rights
 - You can provide offended students with avenues to exercise their free speech rights against those using their rights to cause others emotional harm
 - You can have developmental conversations with those exercising their free speech rights in harmful ways on why it is harmful
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Moving Forward

- You can work to repair the community within your residence hall/apartment by hosting programs centered on community building
 - You can host programs that include topics such as handling conflict management, being inclusive, expressing empathy, reflecting feelings, and generating safe spaces
 - Remember, the focus of these programs shouldn't be on the free speech issue but rather, working on creating spaces within your residential community where differing views can be shared and discussed openly within the group so the free speech issue can be discussed authentically
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Crisis Response Module

Topics

- Active Shooters on Campus
 - Natural Disasters
 - Alcohol and Drugs
 - Crisis Follow-Up
 - **Red Flags**
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Red Flags Intro

The Red Flag Campaign encourages a bystander intervention strategy to address and prevent sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking on college campuses (VActionAlliance, 2019). This module will provide RAs the knowledge and skills to recognize the signs or red flags of a residents' unusual behavior and allow the chance for intervention.

Topics for Red Flags

- Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships
- Red Flags for Abusive Relationships and Friendships
- Stalking Myths and Realities
- Examining Your Relationship
- When You See a Red Flag, Say Something
- Helping a Friend Who is Being Abused
- Safety Planning for Students
- Bystander Intervention Strategies

Educating Students on Red Flags

- Communicate the values and goals of the institution
 - Educate all residents about the issues they may not be aware of by providing tips on safety planning and reducing risk
 - Foster a sense of community amongst the students to create a safe and healthy environment
 - Serve as a referral source to students who have questions or need to talk about these issues
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Supporting Students

- Recognize any of the potential signs of sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking and ask the resident about the situation.
 - Ask about the unusual behaviors noticed (i.e. physical, emotional, or sexual abuse) and ask if the person needs help
 - Serve as a referral source to students who have questions or need to talk about these issues
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Conclusion

Congratulations! You have completed 24 of the 40 sub-topics within this online module. Please revisit the modules for review and additional training as needed.

References

Angiello, R. (2010). Study looks at online learning vs. traditional instruction. *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*. 76(2), 56-59.

Bird, L. E., Mackin, M. B., & Schuster, S. K. (Eds.). (2006). *The first amendment on campus: A handbook for college and university administrators*. USA: NASPA.

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Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (n.d.). Campus rights. Retrieved from <https://www.thefire.org/campus-rights/>

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Zuniga, X. (2003). Bridging differences through intergroup dialogue. *About Campus* 7(6), 8-16.

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Dedicated student affairs professionals must be current with best practices for supporting students and supporting students who serve in a student leader position. To create effective and intentional leaders, student leaders, such as Resident Advisors (RAs), must be well prepared to handle situations pertaining to identity, free speech, wellness, crisis, campus resources, customer service, technology, boundaries, and administrative tasks. Virtual training modules have been identified as additional trainings to teambuilding and seminal events during the first in-service training program of the spring semester. This case study team recognizes virtual learning, in combination with face-to-face learning, caters to different learner types (Angiello, 2010). This RA virtual training allows for flexibility and autonomy for RAs when they are selecting the topics to cover and in which order.

Current trainings, including Diversity and Inclusion, Sexual Assault and Harassment, Campus Judicial Procedures, and Administrative Tasks, are built to allow RAs to build a set of specific skills that would enable them to be successful in their duties. We have identified eight additional modules based of the current political realities and necessary in-person training supplementals to be added to these current training topics: Identity, Free Speech, Wellness, Crisis Response, Administrative, Customer Service, Technology and Boundaries, and Campus Resources.

For each of the eight Training Modules, there are five sub-topics. The RAs will complete three of the sub-topics of their choosing during the first two weeks of the semester. RAs can complete the topics in any order they choose, so long as they complete at least three of the sub-topics from each module. Additionally, RAs can complete the remaining sub-topics as they desire, or supervisors can assign sub-topic completion for accountability purposes or community support. Three of the eight training modules have been described in further detail for the

purposes of this presentation. First, the identity module focuses on building cultural competence and acknowledging socially constructed systems that affect individuals. Second, the free speech training module is designed to provide RAs support for programs aimed at educating and rebuilding their communities following free speech events on campus. Lastly, the crisis response training module has an emphasis in recognizing red flags for dating and domestic violence and how to best intervene if the situation occurs. Each of these training modules are designed to be a starting point of conversation amongst students and professionals across campus.

As society has become more diverse, RAs need to be able to build bridges between students from diverse backgrounds that include cultural components. A method to help create an understanding is allowing RA's to examine students' own cultures, effectively communicate to diverse cultural backgrounds, and invite students to explore intersecting identities. The theoretical foundation of Cultural Paradigms provides truth behind socially constructed systems "unacknowledged gender, culture, sexuality, class, language, and even personality preferences" (Guido, Chavez, Lincoln., 2010, p. 9). In order to address the unacknowledged identities, this specific sub-topic will focus on building cultural competence.

In this module, RAs will be able to work through three different subsections to help develop cultural competence. The first subsection is Sustained Communication that encourages listening and questioning across lines of differences. An example would provide ways to create programs that will encourage RA's to create open dialogue. Second, the Critical Social Awareness subsection will use political realities, develop a shared vocabulary to help guide the conversation. As an example, when RAs begin to question and explore the self-segregation of residents their Critical Social Awareness is further developed. This subsection will prompt RAs to consider what informs their perceptions of others and their behaviors. The final subsection,

Bridge Building, allows RAs to see connections and disconnections between groups. These connections will help build cultural competence when working with residents. An example of bridging is when a white female student acknowledges her own salient privileges and has a willingness to learn and in turn shows empathy towards others. Building cultural competence is a life-long learning process that will require RAs to constantly use opportunities to learn from their residents.

Free speech is a current hot topic issue within the field of higher education, and RAs must be educated on how to support and foster their residential communities when free speech issues, such as bias incidents, arise. The free speech sub-topic training “Supporting Offended Students and Protecting Students’ Free Speech Rights” offers RAs guidance for managing the “balancing act” of supporting students who have been hurt by Free Speech incidents and protecting the rights of all students (Bird, Mackin, & Schuster, 2006, p. 15). Specifically, this sub-topic training provides RAs with programming suggestions aimed at educating and rebuilding their communities following such incidents. First, the RA is directed to offer support to the offended student, as they are the individuals most likely experiencing emotional upheaval, through directing the offended students to on-campus resources, including counseling, suggesting the RAs make statements disavowing the bias incident, and hosting programs around social justice and diversity topics related to the bias incident to help communicate why the offended students are offended. Second, the RA is directed at educating students on their Free Speech rights, and third, the RA is directed to focus on rebuilding their communities following divisive incidents and reactions.

RAs live within the residence halls where they interact and build relationships with the residents. These student leaders play a crucial role in prevention of domestic and dating violence

and fostering a sense of community within the residence hall. For additional support for this particular sub-topic, The Red Flag Campaign and Culture of Respect have influenced the training content. The Red Flag Campaign encourages a bystander intervention strategy to address and prevent sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking on college campuses (VActionAlliance, 2019). This module will provide RAs the knowledge and skills to recognize the signs or red flags of a residents' unusual behavior and allow the chance for intervention. Among the training sub-topic, RAs will interact with the module through quizzes, role playing, and recognizing differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships. For example, the training module will prompt the RA with a 'case study' and ask what their action steps would be and how to handle the situation afterwards. The RAs will be reminded of their role in communicating the values and goals of the institution, educating all residents about safety planning and reducing risk, fostering a sense of community by creating a safe and healthy environment, and serving as a referral source to students.

The eight topics chosen for the online training were so chosen because they offered a variety of current event topics and in-person training supports to aid in the educational awareness of RAs, as well as further their development into global citizens. With this training, the hope is that RAs will be better prepared to address possible issues in their residential communities, as well as more aware of topics and practices that could impact their careers and lives after their time in the RA role and their educational pursuits have concluded. Additionally, these topics were chosen and presented in a way as to allow for further development when they are put into practice for RAs. Specifically, the trainings could be further designed to represent a type of "choose your own adventure" virtual game, where RAs earn coins or tokens upon completing each of their modules. Also, the training modules could include other media elements, such as

videos, quizzes, or role playing, to expand upon the PowerPoint presentation to keep RAs engaged in the supplemental trainings.

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- Angiello, R. (2010). Study looks at online learning vs. traditional instruction. *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*. 76(2), 56-59.
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