Resident Assistant Training Curriculum: Virtual Case Study Competition

Team Leader: Charles Frazier
Group Members: Paige Compton, Heather Deere, Carly Zeiger
Texas A&M University

Objectives of Training

1. Educate Resident Assistants on topics related to the CAS standards and beyond to help them be successful in their role.
2. Provide tangible skills that Resident Assistants can utilize in post-graduate careers.
3. Connect to a new generation of students through technology and innovative methods.
4. Assist Resident Assistants with their own holistic development through required training.

Generation Z

- This generation has a special interest in professional development opportunities that will allow them to advance in their career.
- Employers believe that this generation will need special training for skills like communication, teamwork, and other interpersonal skills.
- These trainings are designed to provide RAs with the skills they feel will be valuable to their long term career goals while addressing employer needs.

Conflict Management

Outline

- Why conflict management is important in the RA role
- The 5 Conflict Management Styles: Competing, Collaborating, Compromising, Avoiding, Accommodating
  - How each style can be beneficial in conflict situations
- Mediating conflict among others, and mediating conflict between you and someone else

Reasons

- RAs work with peers, supervisors, and residents that may engage in conflict at some point
- In education and community development programs, staff members must encourage residents to participate in mediating conflict within the community (CAS standards)

RA Wellness & Self-Care

Outline

- What is wellness?
- Why is wellness important in my role as an RA?
- Setting Boundaries
- How do I incorporate wellness into my programming?
- What is burnout?
- What to do when you're experiencing burnout?

Reasoning

- It is important that RAs have the skills to prevent burnout and take care of themselves — as their positions can be stressful.
- it is also important that the RAs know the signs of burnout so they can support one another (or themselves) by knowing when to ask for help and time to recover.

Incorporating New Students

Outline

1. Identifying new students in your community.
2. Why serving transfer students is critical to community building.
3. Unique needs of transfer students.
4. What resources can you utilize to create sense of belonging.

Reasoning

1. It is critical that Resident Assistants are able to smoothly connect students that are new to the community in order for these students to feel a sense of belonging in their community
2. Transfers are less likely to:
   a. engage in co-curricular activities like intramural sports and campus clubs than native students
   b. use support services like counseling and tutoring than "native" students and develop close friendships with peers than "native" students

Hazing

1. Definition of hazing
2. Misconceptions of hazing
3. What hazing may look like in your residents
4. How to report hazing
5. How you can support students who may experience hazing

Reasons

1. Prevalence of hazing on college campuses
2. Negative impacts hazing can have on student success

Individual Assistance and Referral

Outline

- Why referral is important - Not all students are prepared or will understand what is available to them
- Ways to get to know students intentionally to assist them with their unique needs
- Go over campus resources in order to equip RAs to help students to the best of their abilities

Reasons

- CAS Standards of individual assistance and referral and community building are essential for RA and student success - teaching RAs how to provide this assistance to students will improve their relationships with students

Navigating Difficult Conversations

Outline

1. Learn how to identify when a conversation might be difficult to have.
2. Examples of difficult conversations.
3. Strategies for approaching these conversations.
4. Define active listening and its role in difficult conversations.

Reasoning

1. This training meets the CAS requirement of encouraging residents to participate in mediating conflict within the community.
2. Resident Assistants will engage in a variety of conversations with roommates, peers, and co-workers. This training will prepare RAs to engage in these conversations in and outside of their work.

Crisis Intervention

Outline

- Examples of crisis in your residence hall.
- Identifying resources that assist in times of crisis.
- Your role in crisis intervention.
- Tips for interacting with peers in crisis

Reasoning

1. Crisis cannot always be anticipated, mitigated, or planned for, and RAs are often the first responders in their own communities.
2. The CAS standards require that all residence life staff are trained to respond to crisis.

Engaging the Disengaged

Outline

- What does a disengaged resident look like?
- What are reasons residents can be disengaged from the community?
- What to do when trying to incorporate this student into the community?
- How do I ensure that the spaces that I create as an RA are inclusive of everyone?

Reasoning

- Community building involves all students in the community — even the ones that don't engage with everyone else.
- Engaging disengaged students ensures that the RA has reached ALL of their residents and encouraged them to interact with their respective communities.

Technology & Social Media

Outline

- Why this is important - Technology is the future of education
- As RAs, they may have multiple forms of communication with residents, supervisors, and peers - how to navigate this
- What is a digital identity and how to stay true to yourself while remaining professional

Reasons

- CAS standards state RAs should have Interpersonal competence and intrapersonal development
- Knowing how to navigate technology and social media will also help RAs have higher levels of self-awareness and know how to interact with their peers

RA to Resume

1. Reviewing RA official job description or creating one if needed with list of responsibilities
2. Creating a list of transferable skills that corresponds with duties on job description
3. How to articulate transferable skills to others

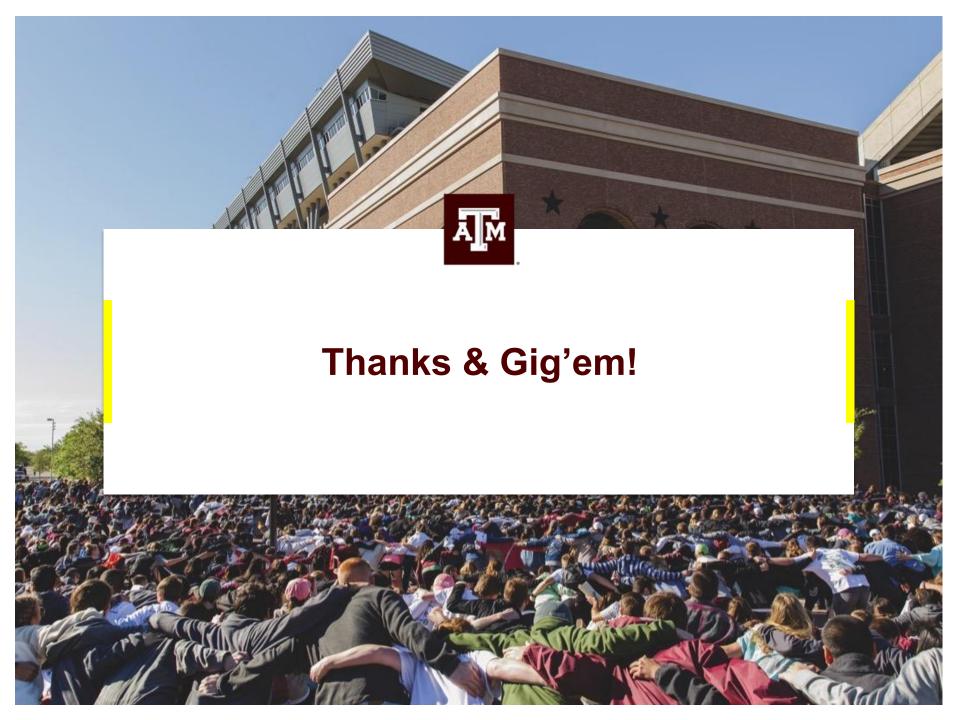Reasons:

1.

Limitations

- Large, research institution frame of reference
- Little to no institution context provided
  - Does Gen Z encompass majority of student population?

Thanks & Gig'em!

1. Introduction/Objectives of Training

As a team, we have been given the task of developing trainings that will supplement the mandatory in-person trainings that residence assistants (RAs) receive. In order to accomplish this task, the team looked at literature both inside and outside the field of higher education in order to provide a well-rounded training curriculum. Our training program overall has a variety of objectives. First, we aim to educate RAs on topics related to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and beyond to help RAs be successful in their role. We hope to provide tangible skills that RAs can utilize in post-graduate careers. This is a result of our research on Generation Z, which will be covered later in this narrative. Additionally, we aim to connect a new generation of students through technology and innovative methods of training. Finally, the primary objective of our training is to assist RAs with their own holistic development through required training.

2. Generation Z/Framework

Being able to develop the skills necessary for post -graduate employment is essential for Generation Z students, this is due to this generation's special interest in securing long-term employment (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Thus, it is important that the skills we teach during resident assistant training are seen as beneficial long term by the resident assistants themselves. Beyond meeting CAS requirements, our proposed trainings are designed to provide RAs with the skills they feel will be valuable to their long term career goals. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, nearly 80 percent of employers seek graduates with leadership skills and the ability to work on a team, and more than 70 percent expect these new employees to have written communication skills and the ability to solve problems (cite).

3. Conflict Management

Regardless of school size, type, or style, resident advisors are almost guaranteed to deal with conflict as part of their roles. These student workers are often on staff teams with peers, they report to supervisors, and they have relationships with their hall community residents to maintain. This training session is intended to equip RAs with more efficient skills and capabilities to handle conflict as it may arise in the workplace. RAs will more than likely deal with conflict between themselves and others, particularly their coworkers. However, the most conflict they may deal with is among residents. Many students come into conflict with their roommates, friends, etc., and RAs often are the first person residents turn to for help in mediating this conflict. The CAS standards address the need for RAs to encourage residents to participate in mediating conflict within the community. Teaching them the five common conflict management styles (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating) (Bisk, 2019) will allow RAs to understand their own conflict styles and mediate it in their roles more effectively.

4. RA Wellness & Self-Care

Resident Advisors (RAs) are in role that is highly stressful by nature. As paraprofessionals, these students have to maintain a 20 hr/week work schedule that has night and weekend commitments, alongside being a full-time student. As the RA position becomes increasingly complex, it is important that the senior level residence life staff members equip these students with the skills to take care of themselves while they do the same for others (McLaughlin, 2018). This module will provide the RAs with empirical knowledge that does the following: 1) define self-care and wellness and demonstrate why it is important to the RA position, 2) provide examples of self-care/wellness activities and ways to incorporate them into their programming, 3) discuss the importance of setting boundaries and how it can structure their personal self-care plan, and 4) define burnout and discuss the signs so they know when to ask for/provide help to others.

5. Incorporating New Students

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the population of transfer students is growing in number and is beginning to represent a sizable portion of the overall student population (2008). It can be inferred from this data that residence life communities are experiencing an influx of transfer students in their communities. For this reason, it is imperative that resident assistants have an understanding of how to incorporate transfer students into an existing community. This online training module is designed to teach resident assistants the unique needs of transfer students and how to best serve them. For example, transfers are less likely to engage in co-curricular activities or utilize support services. Resident Assistants are critical touchpoints that can provide transfers the welcoming and resourceful environment needed to thrive.

6. Hazing

Hazing occurs on all campuses with all types of students. The role of an RA includes interacting with a variety of students, and some of these students may experience hazing during their duration of living in the residence halls. It is important to equip RAs with information about hazing in order to assist and support students who may be experiencing hazing, understand the reporting procedures for hazing behaviors,….and prevent hazing from happening on campuses. While each student may react to hazing differently, this training will help RAs identify some common warning signs of people experiencing hazing or some questions to ask a student who you may think is experiencing hazing.

7. Individual Assistance and Referral
   When students arrive on campus, not all of them feel prepared or well-equipped to begin their journey into adulthood. Campuses of all different types provide many resources outside of

the classroom that allow students to succeed. RAs are the front line of assist for on-campus residing students, and it is important they have a knowledge of resources and helping skills to help all students with their unique needs. Equipping RAs with skills to connect with students and provide them with assistance will not only help students to be successful in college, but will help RAs and students build relationships more easily.

8. Navigating Difficult Conversations
    This training specifically addresses the CAS standard that requires residence life professionals to provide opportunities for students to develop their problem-solving and leadership skills. Resident Assistants will have the opportunity both inside and outside of their role to engage in conversations difficult in nature. This training is designed to assist RAs in recognizing difficult conversations and to show how active listening can aid their ability to engage in these conversations. It is our hope that by training RAs to navigate difficult conversations in their work environment, these skills will transfer to their personal and post-graduate life. This training will be most effective as an in-person training that allows RAs to role-play and practice their new skills.

9. Crisis Intervention
Crisis intervention is one of the hallmark duties for an RA. In RA training programs across the country, Behind Closed Doors serves as the experiential crisis intervention training that allows RAs to test their skills and receive validation or critiques of their techniques. However, how do the RAs brush up on their skills after training? This training module will be provided in an online format to provide skill that allow the RA to do the following: 1) know the types of crisis that may present themselves in their halls, 2) understand their role in crisis intervention, 3) identify the resources that may assist them in their crisis management, and 4) provide skills to allow the students to interact with peers in crisis.

10. Engaging the Disengaged

There is not much research on reaching disengaged students in residence halls; however, since the RAs programming is an essential portion of a residence education curriculum, research focused on disengaged students in classroom settings can be adapted to fit this topic. An important aspect of community building are the people who live in it. Effective community building strives to include each member of the community — so what do we do if we have members of the community that do not engage with the overall community? This module will focus on the following: 1) identifying disengaged residents, 2) discussing reasons why residents can be disengaged from the community, 3) how to incorporate disengaged students into the community, and 4) how to ensure that the spaces that RAs create and facilitate are inclusive of everyone in their community (Readyeducation.com, 2018; Excite.com, 2018).

11. Technology & Social Media

Many scholars believe that technology is now becoming integral to student learning in a college environment. Different technologies contribute to the educational environments and learning styles of students (Patton et al., 2016). For these reasons, it is imperative to incorporate technology and how to use it into trainings for student leaders. Social media is a large part of this technology. RAs will interact with residents through technology and social media on multiple occasions, and they would benefit from learning best practices on managing their social identities. This training session will assist students in better understanding their own identities in relation to technology and how to use social media in the scope of their role.

12. RA to Resume

While being an RA may have great incentives and perks during an RA's time as a student, it is important for RAs to know how to articulate the transferable skills they gain in their role. It may be challenging to share how RA responsibilities translate into other employment opportunities. This training session will allow RAs to reflect on their responsibilities and identify the ways their skills can be used outside of the RA position.

The session may assist RAs in understanding their position in a new way and recognize their development and growth.

13. Limitations/Conclusion

We recognize there are multiple limitations to the framework we took in this case. First and foremost, we all come from experiences at a large, public, land-grant institution. We worked hard to incorporate all institution types into our thought process and decisions for this training. We do, however, recognize that our experiences are all from one type of institution. Another limitation of our work on this case is that we have little contextual information about the institution in question. It is always helpful to have a picture of the institution and the type of student population it serves. Our framework centered around Generation Z as students, but we do not know for sure if this population makes up the majority of the institution's students.

We developed our proposed training based on experience and competencies for residence life professionals in the CAS standards. We believe these modules will provide the best and most well-rounded training experience for RAs at this institution. While there may never be a completely perfect training for residence life student staff, we believe our proposed training will move this institution one step closer.

References

Bisk. (2019). The five styles of conflict resolution. University of Notre Dame Mendoza College of Business. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame on behalf of Bisk Education. Retrieved February 11, 2019 from https://www.notredameonline.com/resources/negotiations/the-five-styles-of-conflict-resolution/#. XGIzXc9KjaZ

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). (2008). Descriptive summary of 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students: Three years later (NCES Report 2008-174). Washington,

DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://nces.
ed.gov/Pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008174

Patton, L. D., Renn, K. A., Guido, F. M., Quaye, S. J., Evans, N. J., & Forney, D. S. (2016).
Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA:
Jossey-Bass.

Poague, E. (2018, December 18). Gen Z Is Shaping a New Era of Learning: Here's What you
Should Know. Retrieved February 11, 2019, from
https://learning.linkedin.com/blog/learning-thought-leadership/gen-z-is-shaping-a-new-era-of-lea
rning--heres-what-you-should-kn

Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2016). Generation Z goes to college. First edition. Corey Seemiller,
Meghan Grace. San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass, [2016]. Retrieved from
http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db
=cat03318a&AN=tamug.4990778&site=eds-live