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Aaron Harbaugh, Nico Smith, & Hannah Thomas
Texas A&M University

Introduction

With the influx of traditional-aged college freshman entering college from 2013-2018 now identifying as Generation Z (individuals born from 1995-2010), institutions are being forced to adapt their offerings, services, and resources to fit the needs of this new population of students. While the research is still fresh, scholars like Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace have published the findings of a study comprised of 150,000 students in their 2016 book *Gen Z Goes to College*. We have utilized themes from their work centered around Gen Z's Learning Preferences, including students' aptitude for *observation*, *broadly applicable learning*, and *intrapersonal learning* to guide our rationale and delivery of training topics.

Advantages

Not only does moving training topics online fit to the learning preferences of Gen Z students, it also provides student affairs professionals with flexibility in their approach to student development. By providing students with 24/7 access to training modules, students are able to complete tasks at their own pace working around internships, job commitments, or community engagement activities. All of which are characteristics of Gen Z. After the initial investment in the development of online modules and programs, moving trainings to an online format provides a low-cost alternative to in-person trainings while increasing the capacity of student affairs professionals. Online training modules make assessing and tracking student learning easy with regard to preparation. All while providing both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, moving to an online system allows for the seamless incorporation of videos, discussion boards, and other forms of virtual engagement that is proven to aid in student learning.

Considerations

When weighing the pros and cons of implementing an online training system to enhance the learning experience of RAs, it is important to consider an institution's type and organizational structure. Large Research One institutions could have an internal IT department capable of creating online trainings such as the ones proposed in this case study, whereas a small private school might need to outsource to an external stakeholder. It is also important to consider what training structures and resources an institution already has in place. For example, if a university is already using online training modules to train full-time employees, the infrastructure would already be in place to create student training modules. Whereas a Residence Life Department not using online modules would have to essentially to build these trainings from the ground up. An institution's organizational model, for example a Bureaucratic vs. Collegial Model will influence their ability to collaborate between departments freely and rely on the expertise of the knowledge bases on campus. This, along with an institutions financial, contractual, and legal obligations will determine what outside presenters (if any) will be utilized for the online trainings.

Implementation

As is the case at Bronson University, our team strongly feels that online training modules cannot and should not fully replace the in-person trainings traditionally associated with RA student development. However, we believe that they provide opportunities to enhance and strengthen the existing training curriculum that is already in place. We believe that the online modules will be most impactful if they are incorporated both before and after the traditional intensive in-person training that occurs before resident move in begins in order to provide supplemental and continued learning for student staff. Modules focused around the development of the RAs themselves should be completed first in order to ease

students into the training curriculum and create buy in through Gen Z's need for intrapersonal reflection. These modules will include *Getting to Know the Leader in You, Conflict Styles and Assessment, CliftonStrengths for Students,* and *Campus Traditions*. Students will be responsible for completing these modules 6 weeks prior to coming on campus for Traditional RA training, with the students averaging about one module per week. Then, two weeks prior to coming back for training students will have the opportunity to complete the modules *Professionalism and Living in a Fishbowl, Professional Workplace Communication, and Empowering First Gen Students*. These topics will introduce students to RA specific themes and allows students to reflect upon the importance of their role as a professional and peer mentor leading to richer, more engage dialogues during in-person training. After move in week, and prior to the first day of class, the *Don't Burn out! Self-Care as an RA* module will open and students will have 2 weeks to complete it. This ensures that students have real life experience on what the RA role entails, and will be able to discover strategies for Self Care that set them up for success.

Getting to know the Leader in You

This section will provide a baseline knowledge for students on guiding leadership theories, and allow them to engage in self-discovery through personality assessments. The module will also provide students with the opportunity to see the results of other members of their staff and reflect upon how they will function together as a team.

- Brief examination of leadership styles and traits
  - Servant leadership
  - Facilitation model
- Personality Assessments
  - Myers-Briggs
  - True Colors
- Staff Sociogram
- How does this impact the RA in their position?
- Intersections of personality styles and leadership

CliftonStrengths for Students

This module will take students for a deeper dive into learning about themselves as a leader. After taking the assessment, this module will take students on a journey to explore how they can maximize their strengths in their role as an RA. Students will also engage in a one hour follow up session during in-person training in which they are able to engage in group process exercises.

- Have RA staff take CliftonStrengths assessment
- Use CliftonStrengths information to facilitate deeper discussion between staff
- Incorporate CliftonStrengths information into full training curriculum
  - Would allow for direct connection of online modules and in-person training sessions

Conflict Styles and Assessment

This module will again focus on key unique individual traits for each RA and allow them to engage in virtual role play about how they would react to conflict situations.

- Examine conflict styles and how they can apply to the RA position
  - Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode
  - IPC conflict assessment
- Specific conflict styles
  - Competing (Shark)

- Collaborating (Owl)
- Avoiding (Turtle)
- Accommodating (Teddy Bear)
- Compromising (Fox)
- How does your personal style influence your perspective toward conflict?
- Strengths & weakness of various styles
- How do the styles interact with each other in conflict?

Campus Traditions

This module will introduce key campus traditions and cultural phenomenon's specific to their institution, and give students an opportunity to discuss how to capitalize on this to engage their residents.

- Nearly all college campuses have unique traditions and cultures
- How can these be incorporated into the RA job to enhance the resident experience?
- Traditions & Culture Examples:
  - Core values (TAMU, UT, UF) - investment and ownership in college experience
  - Service Oriented (SHSU) - giving back to local or campus community
  - Unique individual traditions - Mirror Lake (OSU), Primal Scream (Carlton), Cadet/Non-Reg Snowball Fight (VT), etc.
- Incorporating tradition into floor culture and programming
- Using openness to tradition to start hall specific traditions

Professionalism and Living in a Fishbowl

Students will learn about the unique challenges that present when you live where you work and how to balance the boundaries of being a student and residence life representative.

- Living where you work presents unique challenges
- Residents constantly looking to RA's to set an example
- Staff behavior sets the tone and culture for residents
- Effectively representing both the university and Residence Life
- Be mindful of actions - one poor choice can undo a semester's worth of hard work
- What do appropriate boundaries look like?
  - On the clock vs. off
- Online presence
  - Appropriate use of social media
  - Professional presence on social media when working as an RA
- Include examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior
  - Videos, social media posting examples

Professional Workplace Communication

This module will allow students to learn about workplace communication and provide opportunities to engage in discussion and practice appropriate virtual communication etiquette (email, groupme, text message, and social media).
- Staff communication in the workplace should look quite different than in personal life
- Communicating with peers
  - Friendly but professional
  - Communicating through disagreements
- Communicating with supervisors

- - ○ Appropriate language
    - ○ Professional requests - asking, not demanding, etc.
  - ● Effective email communication
  - ● Written vs. Spoken

Empowering First Gen Students

This module will allow students to begin thinking about their role in student success and the unique populations of students that they will be working with.

- ● First-gen students are fully capable of success, but may have less initial knowledge of resources and services available to them
- ● RAs should intentionally build relationships early
- ● Present programs dealing with campus resources, and utilize connections with campus partners
    - ○ Financial Aid
    - ○ Academic advising and academic support services
- ● Understand that first-gen students may find support in unique places
- ● Be familiar with campus resources, so staff are able to assist
- ● In addition to processing through their college experience as first-gen students, many are also members of Gen-Z

Don't Burn out! Self-Care as an RA
- ● Effective time-management
- ● Academics first - what does this actually look like?
- ● When saying no is okay
- ● When you don't have time for it all
- ● Getting out of a rut
- ● Still doing a good job with competing priorities
- ● Practical self-care tips

Conclusion
Literature
- ● Staff expectations for training are rapidly shifting
- ● Simple lecture-style trainings are losing effectiveness as staff dynamics shift
- ● Employees value trainings that incorporate online and group dynamics
- ● Flexibility is highly encouraged
- ● Online training can increase staff engagement and investment in topic area
- ● Change in presentation method keeps materiel fresh
- ● RA staff are increasingly part of Gen Z, and are dealing with their own personal development during their time on staff
- ● Literature for both staff training and Gen Z is highly applicable to many student staff members
- ● Understanding intersectionality of identity is key to fostering successful staff development

Team Considerations

When creating an action plan, the case study team considered the following factors:

- ● RA Training curriculum - what would reasonably be included in core sessions
    - ○ Programming Model, Title IX, Policies & Procedures, QPR, etc.
- ● Online Modules not meant to replace core curriculum, but supplement them
- ● Many sessions were discussed for potential online implementation
- ● For some sessions, the team felt that they would be most impactful if presented as part of the in-

person training
- ○ Students on Autism Spectrum - collaborative w/ campus partners
- ○ Creating a culture of Risk Management
- Creating an appropriate balance between online and in-person training sessions

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RA Training Modules

By: Hannah Thomas, Aaron Harbaugh, and Nico Smith

Incorporating Online Modules in RA Staff Training

- Traditional RA Training has been done face to face
  - Generally lecture style/discussion trainings
- Given mandated trainings and institution specific topics, training can be long
  - Late nights and extended hours, sometimes weekends too
- As the generations of RA staff are changing, so are the ways in which they most effectively learn
  - Millennials and Generation Z
- Shrinking resources is also a challenge facing many universities

Advantages of Going Online

- Format change offers flexibility in completion timeframe
- 24/7 access and availability
- Videos and other multimedia can be efficiently and effectively incorporated
- Low cost after initial development and implementation
- Easy assessment and tracking of completion
- Fits with Millennial and Gen Z learning styles
- Online modules can be incorporated into overall training curriculum
  - Can be referenced and used to help construct overall RA training experience

Considerations when moving Online

- Institution size and resources
  - Does the Department have a dedicated IT department that can collaborate in moving trainings online?
  - Does the Department have the resources to develop quality and educational online modules?
- Does the institution have a formal training department they must liaise with?
- Who is responsible for developing the materiel and modules?
  - Formal part of their job or collateral assignment?
- When building online modules, do outside "presenters" need to be incorporated?
- Institutional profile
  - Will affect resources and staffing for module development
- Technical Support and troubleshooting
  - If modules experience technical issues, who addresses them?

Leadership & Gen Z

- Rapidly growing portion of the workforce and student population
- Increasing numbers of RA staff come from Gen Z
- What does Gen Z value?
  - Honesty
  - Conversation & Dialogue
  - Responsibility & Growth Opportunities
- Emphasize small group dynamics and individuality
- Training must be creative and dynamic
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Effectively building community among Gen Z residents

Implementation

- Hybrid in-person/online training model will be presented to RA staff in training introduction
- Specific expectations for training will be discussed
  - Engagement & attitude
  - Timeline and completion of online modules
- Online modules support the training curriculum
  - Online trainings don't replace RA Training core curriculum
- Online trainings will be referenced throughout in-person training sessions
- If successful, online modules could be expanded for future trainings

Getting to Know the Leader in You!

- Brief examination of leadership styles and traits
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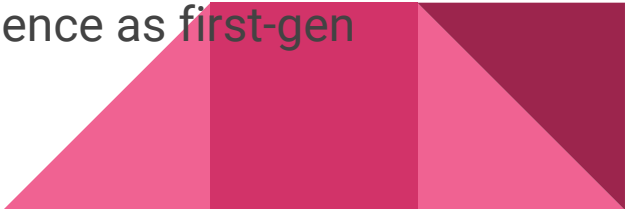 - Videos, social media posting examples

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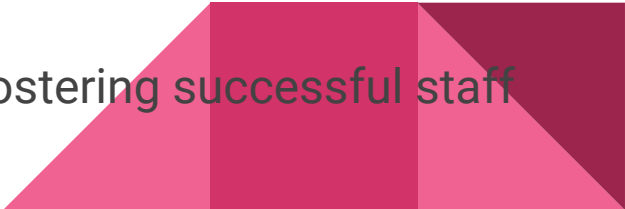
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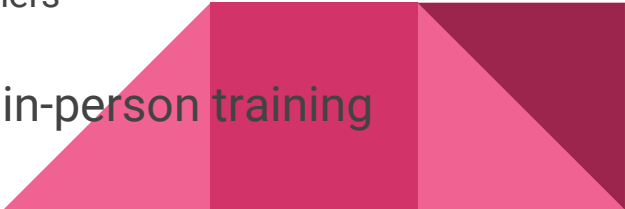- Practical self-care tips

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