University of Connecticut

Team Members:
Tessa Bravata (Captain)
Shalyn Hopley
Mickey Capps

Bronson University is a medium-sized, public liberal arts university located in scenic New England currently enrolling 5,235 undergraduates. Bronson is a proud member of COPLAC and boasts top programs in Environmental Studies and Game Design in the region.

Bronson's motto is "*Sustainable Education for a Changing World.*"

(Adapted from the University of Minnesota Morris)

BRONSON UNIVERSITY
Office of Residence Life

Student Staff Training Committee

Tessa Bravata

Area Coordinator
Lincoln Quad

Mickey Capps

Residence Director
Wilcott Hall

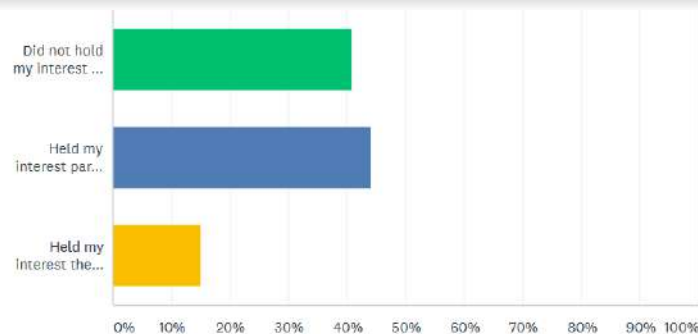**Shay Hopley**

Residence Director
Norwood Hall

Office of Residence Life Mission Statement:

To support healthy communities that foster personal identity development, interpersonal growth, and intellectual engagement.

Current Training

- Entirely In-person
- Feedback from student staff consistently notes length of training sessions and lecture fatigue as sources of dissatisfaction
- Unable to cut essentials such as Behind Closed Doors, Programming, Administrative Tasks, Diversity and Inclusion…

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Did not hold my interest at all	40.70%	35
Held my interest part of the time	44.19%	38
Held my interest the whole time	15.12%	13
TOTAL		86

(Adapted from University of Connecticut's Winter Training Assessment, 2019)

Call to Action

The Student Staff Training Committee was asked to consider additional online training that does not replace the bread and butter of in-person training. This training could be asynchronous and be done at the RAs' own pace, but would have set completion deadlines.

Essential Considerations

- Is virtual training accessible?
  - Access to internet and technology
  - ADA Compliance
- Is it fair to not compensate staff for the time it takes to complete online training?
  - In summer, they are not on contract nor compensated
  - Hours to complete is highly variable
- Is the content we are asking them to complete appropriate for an online delivery method?
  - Asking students to complete potentially triggering material over summer
  - Some content better suited to in-person (team building, administrative tasks, etc.)
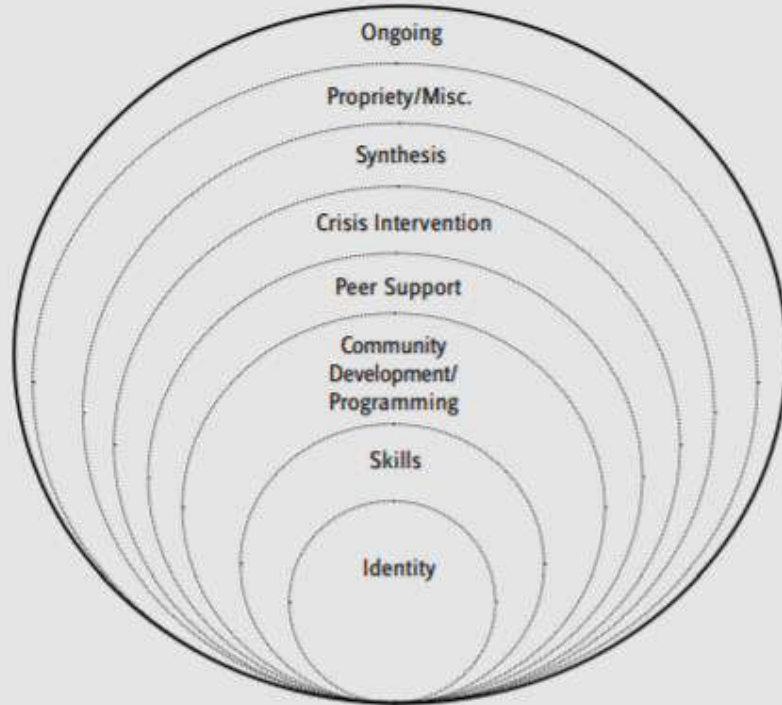- Is creating and monitoring online training feasible for professionals?

Committee's Solutions

Synchronous and scaffolded virtual and in-person experience based upon the RA Sequencing Model and the concepts of gamification

- Occurs simultaneously with RA Training's in-person dates so students have access to technology while being compensated
- Enables both individual reflection and flexibility while also ensuring that it is being completed in an environment with adequate technical and emotional support
- Strategically partners with students and faculty in the Game Design program to create our vision

RA Sequencing Model

RA Sequencing Model (RASM)

Ongoing
Propriety/Misc.
Synthesis
Crisis Intervention
Peer Support
Community Development/ Programming
Skills
Identity

Create a Better Flow Through Sequencing Resident Assistant Training

"We suggest the experiential education of RA training is analogous with adventure training (e.g., ropes courses). For example, on a ropes course there is a progression, or sequence, of activities–from the beginning with events on the ground, or low ropes, to the culminating events on the high elements."[7]

Step 2: Skills, Community Development, and Peer Support are Fostered In Person with Additional Online Reflection

Step 3: Crisis Intervention and Synthesis Completed Online

Identity
The RA builds a virtual avatar:

1. Choose key identity characteristics, like levels of compassion and responsibility.
2. Choose how they will prioritize their many roles-- a student, a conflict mediator, a role model, etc.

Skills
In-person training process used to teach essential skills like Sexual assault and harassment procedures and time management.

Community Development
Learning how to program and interact with difference while reflection via online support.

Peer Support
Practice mediation and listening skills with Behind Closed Doors and online reflection.

Crisis Intervention
Use combination of Behind Closed Doors and Simulation Game "CouRAgeous Communities" to explore ethical decision making and conflict management.

Synthesis
Online reflection to synthesize all training components and create action plan for the future year

More Than Fun?

Educational video games offer active learning that some instructors say is hard to replicate in a traditional classroom.

"They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games (...) They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards."[6]

"Ultimately, the design elements used in games gives the user "freedoms," many of which are the learning "freedoms" touted in colleges and universities; such as the freedom to fail, the freedom to fashion identities, the freedom of interpretation, the freedom to experiment, and the freedom of effort"[5]
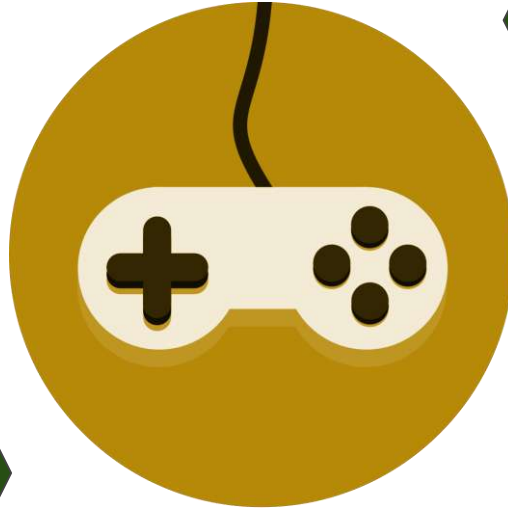
Proposed Topics for RA Training

- Identity & Leadership Development
  - Understanding personal identity and how it relates to RA role
  - Reflecting on ideal RA and leadership qualities they wish to manifest
- Power Dynamics
  - Recognizing power structures (Supervisor to RA, RA to RA, RA to non-RA peer, and RA to Resident)
  - Establishing healthy boundaries

- Building a Healthy/Inclusive Community
  - Considering what elements are present in healthy, inclusive communities
  - Reflecting on public agreements and how to uphold them
- Ethical Decisions
  - Making the best decisions when responding/interacting with residents
  - Managing role conflict as an RA; the balance between being friends and being a leader

Proposed Topics for RA Training

- Interacting with Difference
  - Considering intersecting identities among residents and with their staff
  - Using empathy in resident interactions
- Campus Resources
  - Developing familiarity with the process of referring students to resources
  - Knowing the location and general operations of various offices on campus

- Self Care
  - Developing healthy habits to combat burnout
  - Understanding secondary trauma in the role
  - Recognizing when self-care is needed
- Action Plan/Reflection
  - Providing opportunity for individual reflection
  - Creating goals and action steps for a successful year as an RA

Rationale for Proposed Topics

- Data Driven Decision-Making based on prior student staff and professional staff assessment
- Scaffolding the RA experience through in-person interactions and online practice
- Building competency and developmental growth cognitively, interpersonally, and intrapersonally
- Fostering critical reflection to promote socially just communities in the residence halls
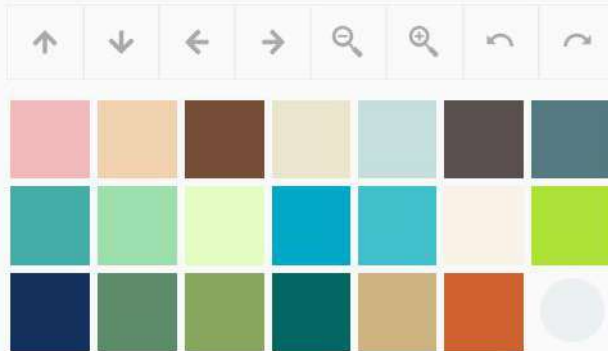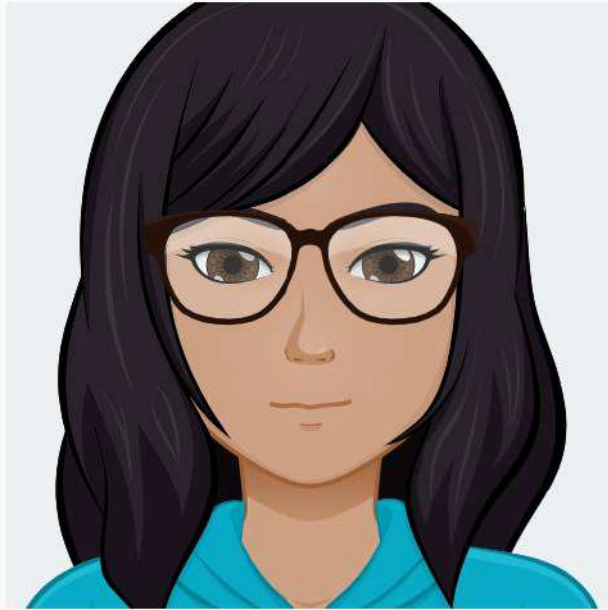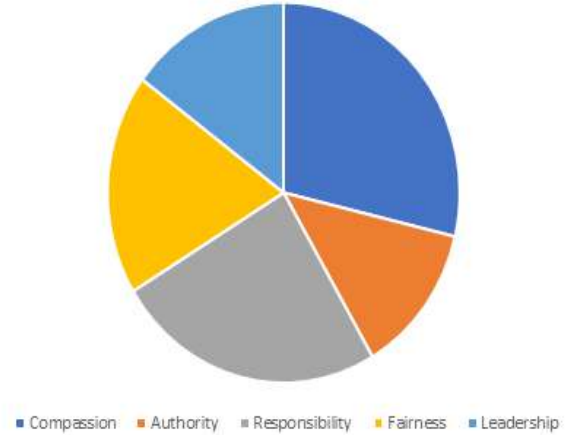
RA Identity Development

RAs will create an avatar based on characteristics they think a successful RA possesses and prioritize their roles as an RA. In the simulation, RAs will be required to refer back to this when making decisions.
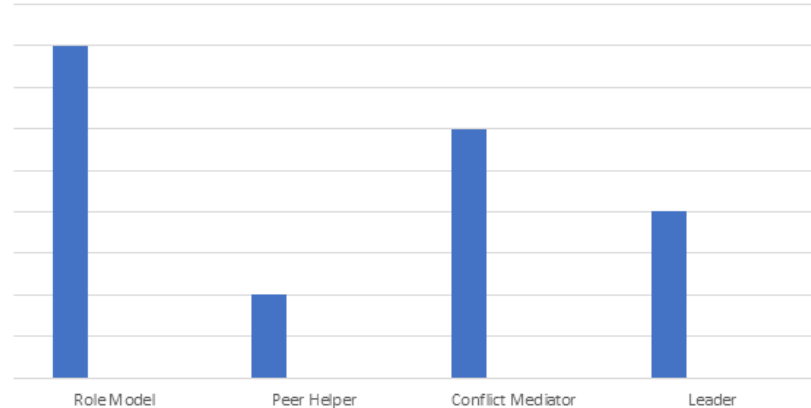

Created from Avatarmaker.com
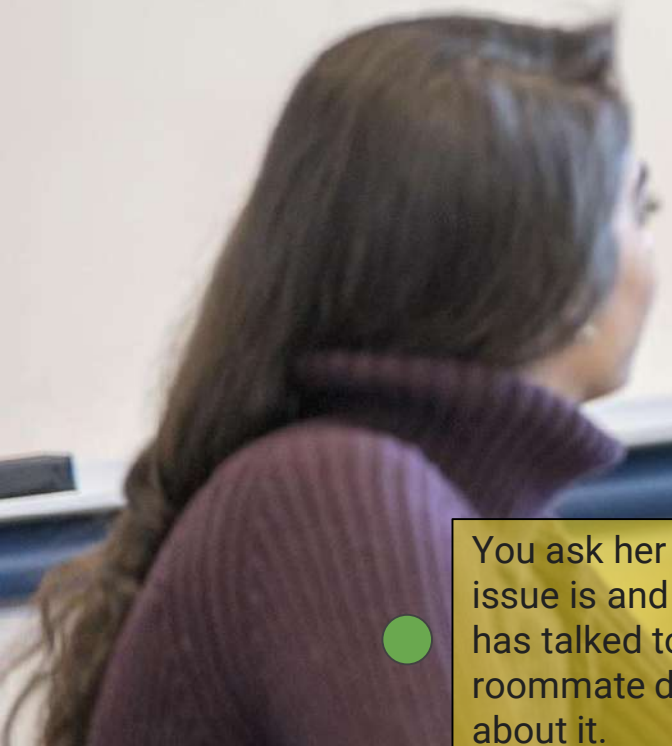
Choose Your Identity Characteristics

- Compassion
- Authority
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Leadership

Prioritize Your Roles

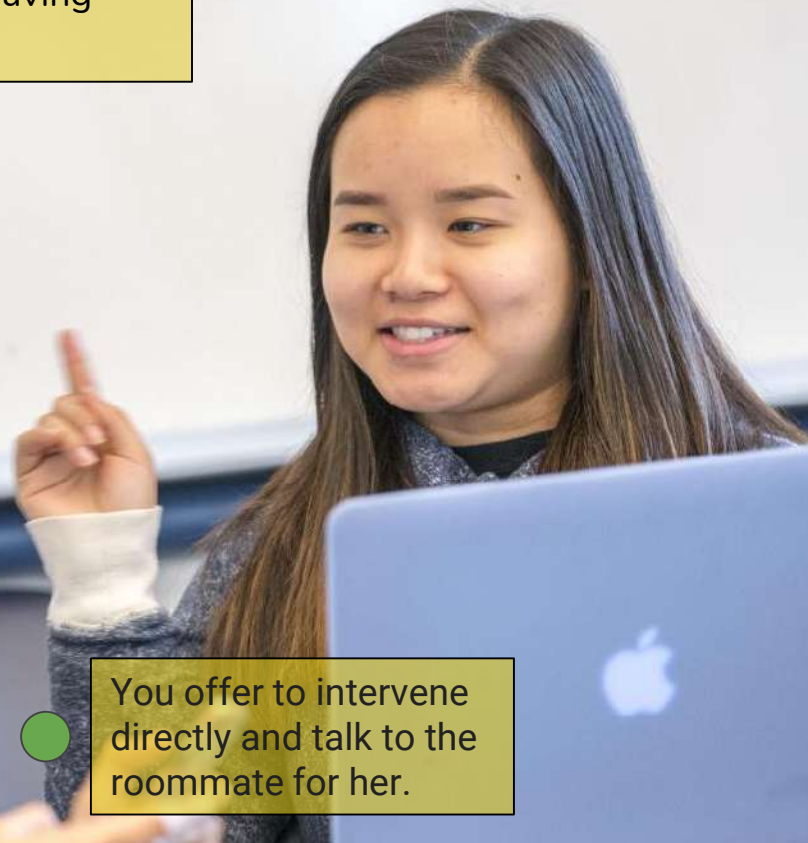Role Model | Peer Helper | Conflict Mediator | Leader

Example of CouRAgeous Communities Scenario

One of your residents catches you in the study lounge and asks if you have time to talk. She then sits down and says she is having some issues with her roommate. How do you respond?

You ask her what the issue is and see if she has talked to her roommate directly about it.

You offer to intervene directly and talk to the roommate for her.

Building Healthy/Inclusive Communities

RAs will be asked to design their ideal floor using this template from myplate.gov. They will be asked to include aspects that are essential to having a healthy and inclusive floor environments.

Example of an RA's Healthy Community

Go Bees! Buzz buzz!

Works Cited

Blimling, G. S. (2015). Student Learning in College Residence Halls. In *Student Learning in College Residence Halls* (pp. 165-178). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass .

Herbert, S. (Director). (2018). *TEDxUALberta: The Power of Gamification in Education* [Motion Picture].

Kegan, R. (2001). From the Language of Rules and Policies to the Language of Public Agreements. In *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation* (pp. 103- 120).

O'Malley, S. (2017, July 19). *More Than Fun?* Retrieved from Inside Higher Ed: https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2017/07/19/educational-games-expand-classroom-learning

Stansbury, M. (2014, August 19). *Why You Should Care About Gamification in Higher Education.* Retrieved from eCampusNews: https://www.ecampusnews.com/2014/08/19/gamification-higher-education- 028/

Toyama, K. (2015, October 29). The Looming Gamification of Higher Ed. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Witney, R., Sherry, E., & Whisler, T. (2016). Create a Beteer Flow Through Resident Assistant Training. *Journal of College & University Student Housing, 43*(1), pp. 28-43.