

**Studentaffairs.com Virtual Case
Study Competition
University of St. Thomas, McIntyre Team**

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Studentaffairs.com Virtual Case Study Competition

Introduction

Thank you for reading our outline narrative. We hope this document will guide the reviewer through our proposal. First, about our team: we are a diverse group with vast experiences in social media, marketing, social work, grant writing, and nonprofit work. Our mission is to mobilize higher education leaders toward social change by centering the voices and stories of underrepresented students in residential halls. Our vision is a world in which all students feel safe and supported as they contribute to the common good. In our proposal we present espoused principles of social justice development, identity development, and leadership development of our mission and vision within these core values:

Our Values

- ❖ **Social Justice:** We affirm the value of individuals' intersectional identities as we fight systems of power, privilege, and oppression on campus.
- ❖ **Community:** We create safer and braver spaces and celebrate the collective wisdom of the students, leaders, educators, and community we engage with.
- ❖ **Student Voice:** We believe students should be centered in every training topic and to help students find their leadership style.
- ❖ **Collaboration:** We believe in using people's strengths to collectively improve our shared experiences.
- ❖ **Listening:** We believe the simple act of listening is an important part of developing social justice, identity, and leadership.

Outline

Becoming a Social Media Star

Social media plays an undeniably influential role in the lives of Gen Z students. This session will give RAs an opportunity to reflect on their own experience with social media and encourage them to become digital leaders. Ahlquist (2014) presents 10 competencies for digital student leadership: "Awareness of Emerging Technology Tools and Platforms; Digital Content Analysis, Sorting Accuracy and Quality from False or Misinterpreted Information; Online Self-Awareness and Reflection of Digital Profile; Establishing Personal Virtual Boundaries including Privacy, Time Management and Overall Wellness; Cultivating Professional, Strategic and Career-Oriented Online Branding; Building a Personal Learning Network; Integration of Digital Technologies into Leadership Presence; Cyber Conflict Resolution and Mediation; Digital Decision Making Strategies based in Positive, Authentic and Constructive Activity; and Using Social Media for Social Good" (para. 11). In this session, we will explain each competency to students and include reflective prompts and exercises to help them consider how they might make strategic choices connected to each competency. Specifically, RAs will learn about healthy social media habits, how to use social media as a tool for connection, and how to set boundaries around how they engage with social media.

Mental Health

If a student were to develop a high fever or physically injure a part of their body, they would likely go to see a doctor or take appropriate medication. On the other hand, issues of mental health such as anxiety, depression, stress, and emotional management can be overlooked because they are not immediately tangible or physically present. More often than not, students are not equipped with tools to identify, process, and maintain a level of optimal mental health. As Resident Assistants learn to take care of their personal mental health, they will have resources to influence their residents towards also maintaining optimal mental health.

In this training module, RAs will become aware of some of the statistics around issues of mental health for young adults. A variety of practical self-care activities will be introduced such as journaling, guided meditations, breathing exercises and physical exercise to emphasize the reality of maintaining optimal mental health. These simple tools will assist RAs with their own mental health as well as increase their resourcefulness for the students they serve in areas of mental health. They will have the opportunity to practice a guided meditation that can be facilitated online for further experience. Finally, RAs will have the opportunity to reflect on their personal lives by setting S.M.A.R.T goals for themselves toward maintaining optimal mental health.

Using Reflection to Connect to Your Why

We don't learn by doing, we learn by thinking about what we do. When students feel personally connected to what they are doing, they thrive. Reflection can help them get there. This session will provide RAs with information around what reflection is, why it matters, and how to use it in their work as RAs. Dewey (1997) defines reflection as "an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supported form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it." He continues, "The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious," (Dewey, 1986). Reflection is often conflated with assessment and evaluation, but in this session, we focus on reflection specifically as a mode of meaning-making. Reflection can be used inwardly, as RAs make meaning from their work with Residence Life, and also outwardly, as they work to support students in their lives on campus. RAs will also learn how to ask powerful questions, which can be applied in contexts ranging from 1:1s with residents to crisis situations, and everything in between. We will end the session by providing resources for RAs to facilitate three different reflection activities, which can be adapted for many different audience types, sizes, and lengths of time.

Intent vs. Impact

Utt (2013) poses an important question: "What does the intent of our action really matter if our actions have the impact of furthering the marginalization or oppression of those around us?" (para. 16). This session will provide RAs with language and a framework that will help them navigate difficult conversations about privilege with their residents and peers. RAs will encounter students from nearly every identity, experience, and ideology in their work. It is important that they know how to communicate effectively and educationally with any student. In this session, we will begin by establishing a common set of language to describe intent, impact, power, privilege, and oppression. Next, RAs will complete an activity in which they will learn about and identify their own target and agent identities. Next, we will present several scenarios in which someone made an offensive comment or acted in an inappropriate way. RAs will consider how to respond to the person by acknowledging both their intent and the impact of their actions. To close out the session, RAs will reflect on how this framework could have helped them navigate problematic situations in the past and how they might apply it to their work as RAs moving forward.

Art of Intentional Conversation

There is an abundant amount of scholarly literature that college student retention and persistence comes from having support from one or a few significant people on campus that have helped a student through obstacles. These people have listened and conversed with the student in regards to family issues, grades, relationship issues, and other issues that impact a student's well-being on campus. The Art of Intentional Conversation, can help with conducting one-on-one meetings, a skill that individual's working in higher education should encompass. Hence, RAs will need to be comfortable leading one-on-one meetings with residents. We hope this topic will prepare RAs with the basic skills to conduct one-on-one meetings with residents. We hope to train RAs with basic skills on listening, asking intentional questions, and developing an action plan together with their resident using beginner level counseling skills from social work, advising, and counseling practices.

In a guided video, RAs will have the opportunity to learn the difference between listening and active listening (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). When meeting with students and people we all tend to think

about what we're going to say next instead of listening to the person speaking. When we listen to respond, we often miss things. When we actively listen, we are able to tune into the emotions of the person who is speaking. Students will also be given tips on tuning into their own body language and how that can impact a student (Stickley, 2011). Stickley offers advice on creating an open body language that shows that the listener is engaged using the SOLER method of sitting squarely, open posture, slightly leaning in, maintaining eye contact, and having a relaxed posture. These basic non-verbal communication is the beginning of creating space for one-on-one sessions.

This topic will also provide RAs with information on having successful conversations such as using OARS (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). OARS stands for asking open-ended questions, giving affirmations, rephrasing what the speaker has said, and summarizing what the speaker has said. This basic tool is a guide that RAs can use during a meeting to affirm they are listening and guiding the conversation. This tool will also go hand in hand with setting up safe space to have one-on-one meetings and having somewhat of an agenda to go over with the resident (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). An agenda could be anything about how the transition into college has been, academics, outside classroom activities, and other topics. After the meeting, a simple follow-up is recommended to continue the relationship between the RA and resident (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). RAs will then have a chance to reflect on how their physical space allows them to have one-on-one meetings with residents, reflect on their body language, and create a meeting agenda throughout the academic year. We hope this topic prepares students on how to have individual meetings with students and that they have the resources to be successful in being one of the first points of contact with students.

Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness is important to focus on perceptions that make RAs strong leaders and balance their other salient identities. We will focus on a Social Justice lens. In this topic we propose the usage of the Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955). This model develops interpersonal awareness. As defined in Smith et al. (2017) the "model demonstrates the interdependencies between how people perceive themselves and how others perceive them with regard to the information that defines them—behavior, knowledge, skills, attitudes, deep-seated issues, and personal history (Luft & Ingham, 1955)" (pg. 221). The model is illustrated as a 4 window matrix. In the quadrants, the model asks how the individual perceives themselves and how others perceive them. In quadrant one, Luft and Ingham (1955) titled this Arena. It is the qualities that an individual knows about themselves and what others know about them. Quadrant two, the Blind Spot, has the qualities that an individual doesn't know about themselves and what others know about them. In quadrant three, the Hidden Arena, are the qualities that an individual knows about themselves but doesn't share or openly share with others. Finally in quadrant four, the Unknown Area, these are qualities that no one is aware of and will always be a continuous area to grow in. We hope this topic will help RAs build a better understanding of their self-awareness, understanding others' differences, and how they understand their role and impact as an RA. This activity will have RAs actively engage in writing and reflecting on the first three quadrants and we ask that they ask their family and friends about quadrant two and if they agree on quadrant one.

Leadership Styles

People have different levels of motivation, different attitudes about teaching and learning, and different responses to specific classroom or work environments and instructional practices (Lane & Schutts, 2014). Understanding these differing characteristics about the self and about others can enable RAs to develop their unique leadership style to result in a successful work ethic and improve teamwork. RAs will identify those strengths by completing the CliftonStrengths online assessment tool. This tool will identify the RA's sequence of 34 themes that are their strengths (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006). For this training, we will unlock the RA's top 5 results. Understanding the strengths can lead to the development of ownership for individual leadership styles. Awareness of these strengths can help RAs develop purpose and meaning (Lane & Schutts, 2014). This knowledge enables RAs to effectively work with each other, using individual strengths, to improve support for students living on campus.

Using the CliftonStrengths will give RAs a better understanding of how they can continue to invest in their talents and to identify what those talents are. For example, if an RA scores as a Relator in their top five CliftonStrengths, they can continue to invest in that skill to build rapport with the residents on campus. By investing in skills they are talented in, RAs can develop skills into strengths which can strengthen their role as an RA. The more thoroughly leadership styles are understood by RAs, the better chance they have of meeting the diverse needs of students and being an effective RA. After completing the online assessment, RAs will be paired with the same partner from the self-awareness training. RAs will participate in an online discussion pertaining to the question on the leadership PowerPoint slide. The questions will require students to reflect on their strengths, their learning, how they can use the strengths, and challenges they may encounter.

Setting Effective Boundaries

College is the perfect place for students to explore their passions, narrow down their career path, dabble in a variety of hobbies, and develop significant relationships. Nonetheless, the endless opportunities can become a cause of significant burnout unless boundaries are set around the commitments that students will say yes and no to. The goal of setting boundaries is to emphasize quality over quantity of one's involvement. Therefore, it is better to do a few things excellently, than to do many things poorly. In prioritizing fewer commitments by setting boundaries, RAs will be able to balance their time effectively, fulfill responsibilities wholeheartedly, and take time to rest.

In this training module, RAs will have the opportunity to do a self-evaluation of how they spend their time on a weekly basis. This exercise will demonstrate truth that even the most capable human being has limited amounts of time and energy. Therefore, this time and energy must be used wisely. After comparing how they spend their time versus how they should spend their time on an average week, students will take a values assessment to explore the driving forces behind where they choose to spend time and energy. Furthermore, RAs will gain an understanding of why they make the choices they make as well as what contradictions might exist between their values and their commitments. As a result, RAs are encouraged come up with a plan to practice boundaries in light of their values and commitments toward avoiding burnout and making the most of their leadership experience.

Crisis Management

When working in Residence Life, RAs will encounter experiences that require immediate responses related to safety. It is essential RAs are prepared to address critical issues for campus and a student's safety. Critical issues arising in campus life include training as a first-responder, alcohol use and abuse, working with campus security and local police, personal safety and sexual assault/violence (Whitney, Early, & Whisler, 2016). These situations require immediate responses that ensure the safety of students and the campus. Depending on the type of crisis, it will require responses that are interpersonal, use rationale, and encompass knowledge of key stakeholders such as campus security, the local police and high level student affairs administrators. Due to the level of depth crisis management training requires, we intend to format this section of the training using sequencing. Sequencing is the "intentional ordering of training topics and activities that are appropriate for the respective group" (Whitney, Early, & Whisler, 2016). This will help students develop rationale for crisis management, how to communicate vital information to key stakeholders and the skills and attitudes for productive response procedures (Whitney, Early, & Whisler, 2016).

Communication is essential when working with crisis. It is important for RAs to know how to use clear and simple messages that foster: 1) personal safety, 2) ability to assess the situation, 3) summon assistance, and 4) make the environment as safe as possible (Badzmierowski, 2011). Using these four steps, RAs will participate in an online training regarding a case study. The response will require RAs to reflect on the short and long term decisions, solution to the issue, and the vital information to be shared with stakeholders. This training will help RAs gain the appropriate crisis response and recovery protocol.

Conclusion

The role of an RA encompasses work that requires a social justice lens, skills in interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, and critical thinking. The topics we proposed provide the wraparound knowledge, skills, and attitudes for working with people. Our training topics supplement evidence-based research methods to help with managing conflict and building effective communication. Paired with training topics that encourage the RA to explore their sense of self, mental health, and leadership. These topics provides RAs the tools for personal and professional development.

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University of St. Thomas

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Our Approach

- Social justice lens
- Theory to practice
- Sessions focus on social justice and leadership development
- We draw from student development theory as well as our team's personal and professional development experience

Proposal Outline

1. Becoming a Social Media Star
2. Mental Health
3. Using Reflection to Connect to Your Why
4. Intent vs. Impact
5. Art of Intentional Conversation
6. Self-Awareness
7. Leadership Styles
8. Setting Effective Boundaries
9. Crisis Management

Becoming a Social Media Star

Overview:

Social media plays an undeniably influential role in the lives of Gen Z students. In this session, RAs will learn about healthy social media habits, how to use social media as a tool for connection, and how to set boundaries around how they engage with social media.

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will learn 10 competencies of digital leaders.
2. RAs will learn to make healthy social media choices.
3. RAs will learn how to use social media as a tool to connect with students and build community.
4. RAs will consider their own personal boundaries and comfort around engaging professionally via social media.

Becoming a Social Media Star (Outline)

1. 10 Digital Leadership Competencies (Ahlquist, 2014)

- a. Awareness of Emerging Technology Tools and Platforms
- b. Digital Content Analysis, Sorting Accuracy and Quality from False or Misinterpreted Information
- c. Online Self-Awareness and Reflection of Digital Profile
- d. Establishing Personal Virtual Boundaries including Privacy, Time Management and Overall Wellness
- e. Cultivating Professional, Strategic and Career-Oriented Online Branding

1. Competencies continued

- a. Building a Personal Learning Network
- b. Integration of Digital Technologies into Leadership Presence
- c. Cyber Conflict Resolution and Mediation
- d. Digital Decision Making Strategies based in Positive, Authentic and Constructive Activity
- e. Using Social Media for Social Good

2. Connect to your own role as an RA

3. Action plan

Mental Health

Overview:

The job of an RA is a demanding one, it is important for RAs to learn to take care of themselves so that they can take care of their residents better. If RAs can find ways to acknowledge and manage their emotions, stress, anxiety, and depression, they can more effectively serve in their role as RA.

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will identify personal causes for stress.
2. RAs will discover a variety of stress management tools.
3. RAs will come up with a plan for emotion and anxiety management.

Mental Health (Outline)

1. Present Statistics of Mental Health in Higher Education (Student Leader/RA focused)
2. Present Various Stress Management Tools (Meditation; Journaling; Creative Outlets: poetry, songwriting; Exercise)
 - a. Meditation Podcasts
 - b. Breathing Exercises
3. Facilitate online meditation as an example for stress management.
4. Individuals have opportunity to set SMART goals around mental health.

Using Reflection to Connect to Your Why

Overview:

We don't learn by doing, we learn by thinking about what we do. When students feel personally connected to what they are doing, they thrive. Reflection can help them get there. In this session, we'll talk about what reflection is, why it matters, and how to use it in your own work as an RA. You'll learn how to ask powerful questions, how to facilitate several reflection activities, and how to make reflection relevant for students.

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will understand the significance of reflection.
2. RAs will learn four different types of reflection and how to ask good questions at each level.
3. RAs will learn how to facilitate several reflection activities.

Using Reflection to Connect to Your Why (Outline)

1. Defining reflection
(Dewey, 1986 & 1997)
2. Connecting reflection to
the RA position
3. 4 levels of reflection
 - a. Reflection
 - b. Self Reflection
 - c. Critical Reflection
 - d. Critical Self Reflection
4. Asking powerful questions
(Block, 2009)
 - a. Personal
 - b. Ambiguous
 - c. Stakes
5. Reflection activities
 - a. Stem sentences (short)
 - b. Reflection pictures (medium)
 - c. Deep listening (long)
6. Activity (reflection pictures)

Intent vs. Impact

Overview:

Sometimes people say things that are unintentionally offensive or harmful. It's important to know how to navigate conversations like this as a student leader. In this session, RAs will learn the difference between intent and impact; identify their target and agent identities; and examine power, privilege, and oppression.

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will understand the difference between intent and impact.
2. RAs will practice discussing power, privilege, and oppression.
3. RAs will have new language to challenge their peers to engage in more inclusive dialogue.

Intent vs. Impact (Outline)

1. “What does the intent of our action really matter if our actions have the impact of furthering the marginalization or oppression of those around us?” (Utt, 2013)
2. Defining intent vs. impact
3. Activity around target/agent identities
4. Intent vs. impact worksheet
5. Talk through scenarios
6. Reflection:
 - a. How could this knowledge have helped you navigate past situations?
 - b. How will you put it into practice in your role as an RA?

Art of Intentional Conversation

Overview:

Intentional conversations with students are at the heart of being an advisor, mentor, teacher, and especially as an RA. Taking time to get to know students as individuals is essential to every aspect of the job, and no matter what area you work in, you will complete some version of intentional conversations multiple times throughout the year. This topic will go over active listening skills and communication strategies to help RAs plan the appointment with the student(s) and to meet the conversation goal.

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will learn to use active listening skills with students to read the underlying tones of the conversation and to prevent any risks from happening.
2. RAs will be able to plan meeting agendas to talk about raising concerns with the student.
3. RAs will plan talking points using “I See You” and OAR methods (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).
4. RAs will learn to create rapport with students.

Art of Intentional Conversation (Outline)

1. Introduction of topic
2. Relation to RA position
3. Ask students to think back to a conversation they had with someone that truly helped them with a challenge or accomplishment. How did they feel before, during, and after having the conversation? Did the listener do anything that helped them feel safe or affirmed?
4. Key points to a successful conversation:
 - a. Active Listening (Miller and Rollnick, 2002)
 - b. Body Language (Stickley, 2011)
 - c. OARS (Miller and Rollnick, 2002)
5. Setting up a Meeting
 - a. Space
 - b. Agenda (Heisserer and Parette, 2002)
 - c. Follow-up (Heisserer and Parette, 2002)
6. Reflection Activity

Self-Awareness

Overview:

The Johari Window is a model to develop interpersonal awareness. As defined in Smith et al. (2017) the “model demonstrates the interdependencies between how people perceive themselves and how others perceive them with regard to the information that defines them—behavior, knowledge, skills, attitudes, deep-seated issues, and personal history” (as cited in Luft and Ingham, 1955).

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will gain better self-awareness and an understanding of how others perceive them.
2. RAs will think about the identities they carry and how that influences them and how they lead or support their residents.
3. RAs will understand the value of self-reflection for personal and professional growth as a lifelong learner.
4. RAs will bond as a team outside of regular meetings

	Things I know about myself	Things I don't know about myself
Things others know about me	Arena	Blind Spot
Things others don't know about me	Hidden Area	Unknown Area

Johari's Window

Self-Awareness (Outline)

1. Open the session with information about the Johari Window model and why it is relevant information. Explain why it's important to understand and explore self-awareness and connect it to understanding differences between them and other students.
2. Introduce the four quadrants and explain each quadrant:
 - a. Quadrant One, Arena - The qualities that an individual knows about themselves and what others know about them.
 - b. Quadrant Two, Blind Spot - The qualities that an individual doesn't know about themselves and what others know about them.
 - c. Quadrant Three, Hidden Arena - The qualities that an individual know about themselves but doesn't share with others.
 - d. Quadrant Four, Unknown Area - The qualities that no one is aware of and will always be a continuous area to grow in.

Self-Awareness (Outline)

3. **Activity:** Have students create the model and have them fill out the qualities they know about themselves. Then randomly pair each RA together to get them to meet outside of the online training to go over each other's Blind Spots, Arena, and Hidden Arena.
4. Give them a list of reflective guiding questions:
 - a. What were you most/not surprised about in your Blind Spots?
 - b. Did you learn anything new about yourself or about your partner?
 - c. How might you use this activity in understanding yourself? What and Who are impacted by your identities on being an RA?
 - d. How did this activity create a shift in you?
 - e. How does this influence your work?

Leadership Styles

Overview:

It is important that RAs understand their own strengths so they can effectively lead the students they support but also succeed in their role. Having knowledge and awareness of one's leadership style can help with communication, developing self-motivation and identifying how to best work with others using strengths.

StrengthsFinder

- Deficit Model → Talent Focused to result in strengths
- Gallup conducts interviews & identifies 34 themes of talent.
- Assessment identified your top five “themes” (group of similar talents).

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will gain knowledge of their personal strengths.
2. RAs will know of the strengths they offer to group settings.
3. RAs will reflect on the strengths they hold, as well as the strengths other RAs hold, to build off on each other's talents.

Leadership Styles (Outline)

1. **Activity:** Individual codes will be sent to RAs, to complete the StrengthsFinder (online) self-assessment within two weeks. Results should be sent to the coordinator after completing the assessment and results will be combined for training. After the two-week period, RAs will be asked to participate in the following online activities:
 - a. Students will read a scanned copy of the StrengthsQuest book. Focusing on what Talent + Investment means.
 - b. Understanding the four domains: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building & Strategic Thinking
2. To conclude Leadership Styles training, students will participate in an online discussion with other RAs, by answering the questions below. They will also be required to respond to at least 2-3 other RAs post.:
 - a. What are your Top 5?
 - b. Which strength do you most resonate with?
 - c. Which strength were you most surprised by?
 - d. Which of your strengths do you most frequently use?
 - e. How will your strengths complement each other's?
 - f. What challenges might you face as your strengths interact?

Setting Effective Boundaries

Overview:

It is important for RAs to set boundaries around their relational energies, time, social/personal life, on-campus activities, and work responsibilities. By doing so, RAs will be able to perform their job successfully as well as take care of their whole selves. RAs must consider the things that they are saying yes to in order to know the things that they need to say no to. As a result, they will be able to prioritize their responsibilities to honor their commitments.

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will identify a list of priorities (including all activities: commitments, volunteering opportunities, leadership etc.).
2. RAs will become more aware of personal values that determine commitments and responsibilities.
3. RAs will learn to say yes to the things that matter most, in order to say no to the things that are lower on the priority list.
4. RAs will serve more wholeheartedly and effectively in their student leadership roles.

Setting Effective Boundaries (Outline)

1. Create a quantitative pie chart to represent where an individual spends their total number of hours per week (include categories such family, work, sleep, recreational, exercise etc.).
 - a. Create another pie-chart to represent where an individual wants to spend total number of hours per week in their ideal world.
2. Take a values assessment.
3. Create time for reflection to compare and contrast pie chart and values assessment.
4. Create a new plan for how one can effectively say no to some commitments, to say yes to other commitments (in alignment with values/priorities).

Crisis Management

Overview:

Critical topics related to crisis management training include training as a first-responder, alcohol use and abuse, working with campus security and local police, personal safety and sexual assault/violence. Sequencing will be used to structure these topics due to the level of depth and attention to detail for learning crisis management. “Sequencing is the intentional ordering of training topics and activities that are appropriate for the respective group” (Whitney, Early & Whisler, 2016).

Learning Outcomes:

1. RAs will become familiar with institutional policies and conduct processes.
2. RAs will gain effective communication in responding to a crisis.
3. RAs will be able to recognize the signs related to dating violence, sexual violence and risk of personal safety.
4. RAs will be able to effectively respond to dating violence, sexual violence and risk of personal safety.

Crisis Management (Outline)

1. **Activity:** RAs will be emailed a case study about critical issues happening in Residence Life.
 - a. In these case studies, RAs will need to answer short and long-term decisions, identify key stakeholders and explain the issue.
 - b. Secondly, RAs will need to outline their response to the solution using Badzmierowski's communication steps.
 - c. Finally, will send their response to the coordinator but also the RA they were randomly paired with (in the self-awareness activity). Sharing with another RA will encourage them to reflect and verbalize their solutions with another individual.

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