

# Proposed Topics for Residence Life Training

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# Meet the Team

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# Overview

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- > **Background**
- > **A Need for More Comprehensive Training**
- > **Proposed Topics**
  - Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion,
  - Marginalized Student Populations
  - Conflict Resolution
  - Counseling & Referral Training
  - Alcohol & Drugs
  - Social Media & Technology
  - Work, Life, & Finance Balance
  - Effective Communication & Professionalism
- > **Considering an Online Format**
- > **Completion & Timeframe for Modules**
- > **Assessment of the New Topics**



# Background

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- > **Bronson University (BU)** opened its doors in 1965;
- > **Student enrollment reached a new high in 2012 with over 50,000 students;**
  - 10,000 of those students were enrolled at least half-time in graduate programs;
- > **BU started their Office of Residence Life in response to growing student enrollment;**
  - Introduced Resident Assistant (RA) positions as more residence halls were built and need grew



## Background, cont.

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- > Current Residence Life trainings cover variety of topics, including *Administrative Tasks & Procedures* and *Campus Judicial Processes*;
- > In addition to the topics covered, RA's participate in various team building activities and scheduled meetings during (and after) trainings;
- > Training is in-person, and pulls from networks established by the Office of Residence Life;



# **A Need for More Comprehensive Training**

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- > Proposed call for new topics to be covered in an online format**
  - New online training would not take away from current trainings, nor would it add more hours to what RA's already have;
- > Online training would be 'self-paced' and require assessment at the end of each topic/module**
  - New training would incorporate preexisting networks and relationship built by the Office of Residence Life
- > Topics would include conflict resolution, the impact of social media and technology, as well as alcohol and drug abuse**



# Proposed Topics

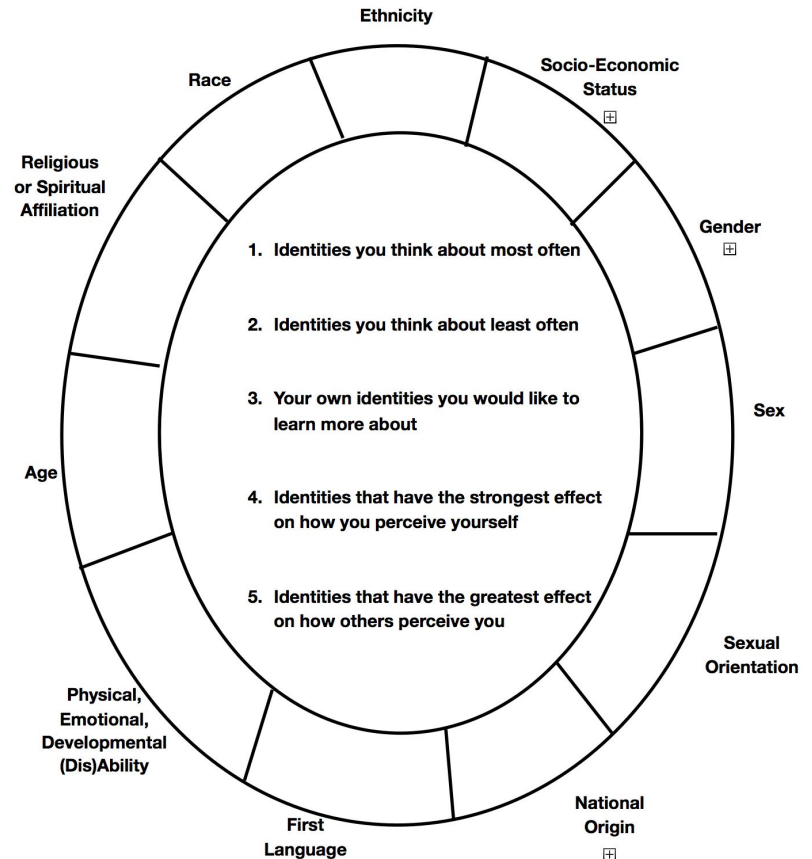
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- > **Proposed topics include:**
  - Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion;
  - Marginalized Student Populations;
  - Conflict Resolution;
  - Counseling & Referral Training;
  - Alcohol & Drugs;
  - Social Media & Technology;
  - Work, Life, & Finance Balance;
  - Effective Communication & Professionalism



# Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

- > **Understanding microaggressions;**
  - What are they?
  - How can we recognize microaggressions?
  - How can we prevent microaggressions?
- > **Understanding privilege;**
  - What is privilege?
  - How can we recognize privilege?
  - How can we break down barriers with our own privilege?
- > **Understanding terminology;**
  - Race
  - Ethnicity





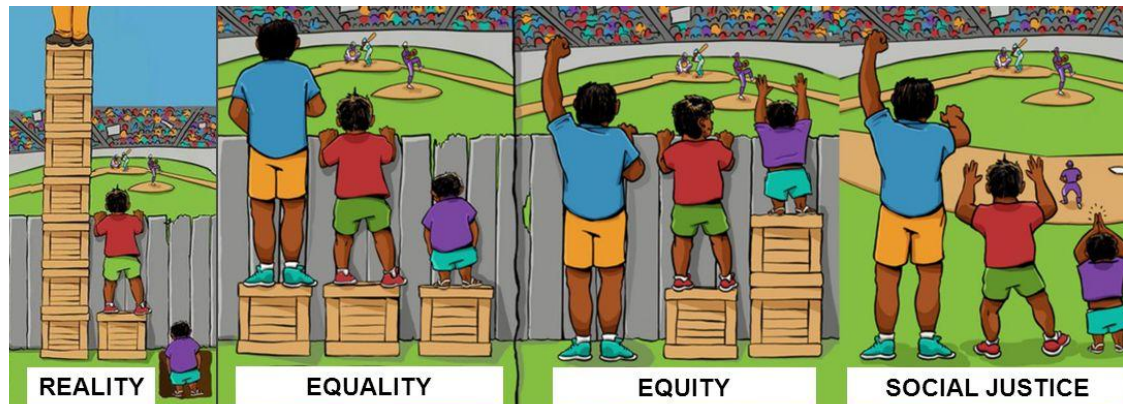
# Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, cont.

- Socio-economic status (SES)
  - Sex
  - Gender & Gender Identity
  - Ableness
  - Religion
  - Belief system
  - Nationality
  - Age
  - Sexual orientation
- > Resources to support teaching topics include videos, articles, etc.



# Marginalized Student Populations

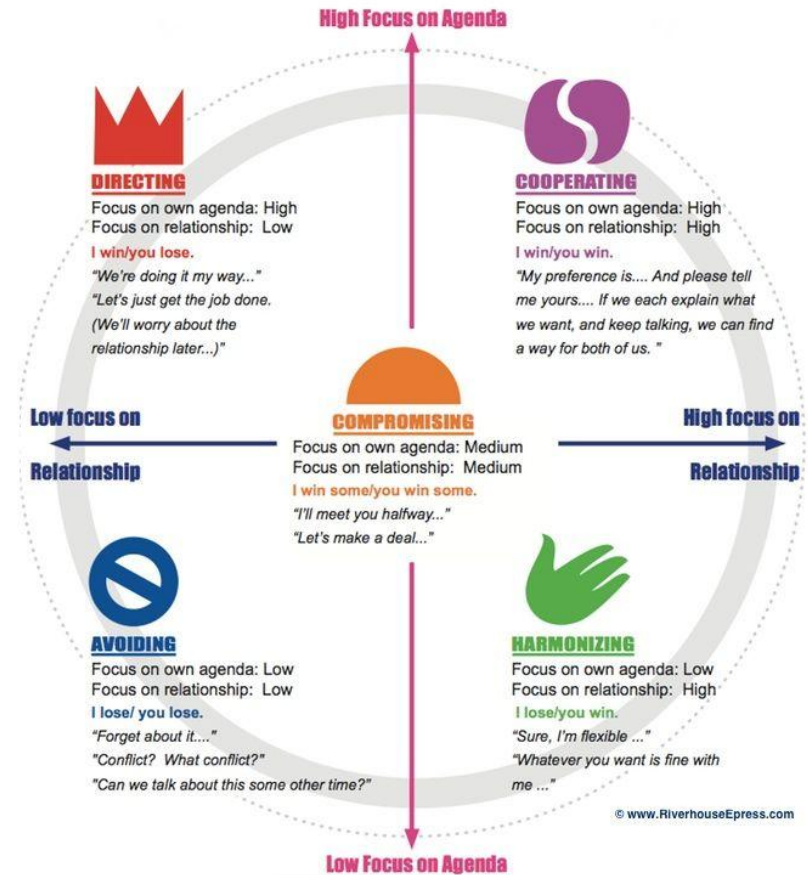
- > Understand different student populations;
  - What is intersectionality?
  - How to recognize multiple identities and the privilege with each?
  - What obstacles are presented to each student population?
- > Understand the difference between equality, equity, and social justice
  - *A process, not an outcome, which seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential, and builds solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action.*



# Conflict Resolution

- > Preparing RA's to handle conflict effectively between:
  - resident-to-resident;
  - resident-to-staff;
  - resident-to-RA;
- > Understand the different approaches to conflict resolution;
- > Understand role as mediator;
- > Know how to create effective dialogue between everyone involved

Five Styles of Responding to Conflict



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# Counseling & Referral Training

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- > Important to recognize role that RA's play when handling counseling and referral process;
- > How to support grieving students;
- > How to intervene with at-risk students;
- > How to identify and properly refer mental health issues and substance abuse;
- > Social network for residents to rely on;
- > When to refer residents to on- and off-campus resources



# Alcohol & Drugs

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- > Understand the impact alcohol & drugs has on residents;
- > Know when to intervene and when to refer students to on- and off-campus support resources;
- > Be comfortable and confident in actively implementing university policies and procedures related to alcohol and drug use on-campus;





# Social Media & Technology

## MULTIPLE GENERATIONS @ WORK

Five Generations Working Side by Side in 2020



### TRADITIONALISTS

Born 1900-1945

Great Depression  
World War II  
Disciplined  
Workplace Loyalty  
Move to the 'Burbs  
Vaccines



### BOOMERS

Born 1946-1964

Vietnam, Moon Landing  
Civil/Women's Rights  
Experimental  
Innovators  
Hard Working  
Personal Computer



### GEN X

Born 1965-1976

Fall of Berlin Wall  
Gulf War  
Independent  
Free Agents  
Internet, MTV, AIDS  
Mobile Phone



### MILLENNIAL

Born 1977-1997

9/11 Attacks  
Community Service  
Immediacy  
Confident, Diversity  
Social Everything  
Google, Facebook



### GEN 2020

After 1997

Age 15 and Younger  
Optimistic  
High Expectations  
Apps  
Social Games  
Tablet Devices

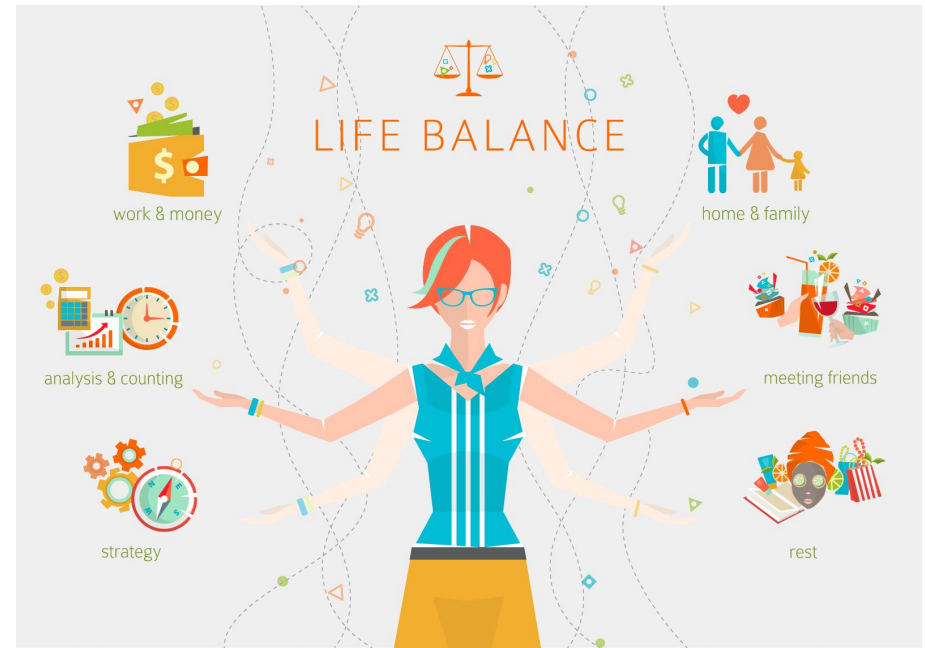
Each generation brings its own view of the world, which creates both opportunities and threats to businesses. **This demands Generational Intelligence!**

- > Understanding the pros and cons of social media & technology;
- > Be able to support residents manage their time spent on social media;
- > Understand the impact of social media & technology on identity development;
- > Understand the impact of social media on student attitudes and multiple generations

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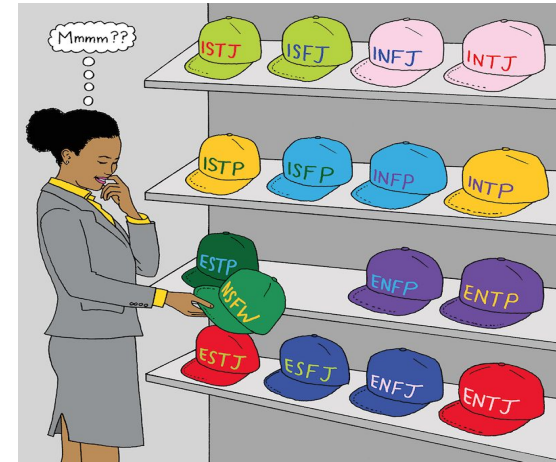
# Work, Life, & Finance Balance

- > Support residents with prioritizing their responsibilities and time management;
- > Support residents with judging the amount of time needed to complete a task;
- > Support residents when budgeting for college, personal life, etc.;
- > Support residents when personal situations arise and the impact on finances and professional/academic life that may have



# Effective Communication & Professionalism

- > Understand how to conduct themselves in a professional manner toward people around them
- > Prepare for life in a professional setting
- > Understand how nonverbal communication is important (i.e., body language)
- > Understand how to foster relationships
- > Understand the impact of cultural identity when communicating



INTERACTION WITH WORLD	ABSORPTION OF INFORMATION
<b>I</b> <b>INTROVERTS</b> often like working alone or in small groups, prefer a more deliberate pace, and like to focus on one task at a time.	<b>S</b> <b>SENSORS</b> are realistic people who like to focus on the facts and details, and apply common sense and past experience to come up with practical solutions to problems.
<b>E</b> <b>EXTROVERTS</b> are energized by people, enjoy a variety of tasks, a quick pace, and are good at multitasking.	<b>N</b> <b>INTUITIVES</b> prefer to focus on possibilities and the big picture, easily see patterns, value innovation, and seek creative solutions to problems.
DECISION-MAKING	ORGANIZATION
<b>T</b> <b>THINKERS</b> tend to make decisions using logical analysis, objectively weigh pros and cons, and value honesty, consistency, and fairness.	<b>J</b> <b>JUDGERS</b> tend to be organized and prepared, like to make and stick to plans, and are comfortable following most rules.
<b>F</b> <b>FEELERS</b> tend to be sensitive and cooperative, and decide based on their own personal values and how others will be affected by their actions.	<b>P</b> <b>PERCEIVERS</b> prefer to keep their options open, like to be able to act spontaneously, and like to be flexible with making plans.





# Considering an Online Format

- > **Asynchronous format;**
  - Ability to work out own pace and complete topics during other trainings, free-time, etc.;
- > **Can still foster community growth between RA's with online forums/discussion boards;**
- > **Learning theories and multimedia learning literature to apply then to a new online training design**

Figure 4.1 illustrates the model that was used in designing the online training module.

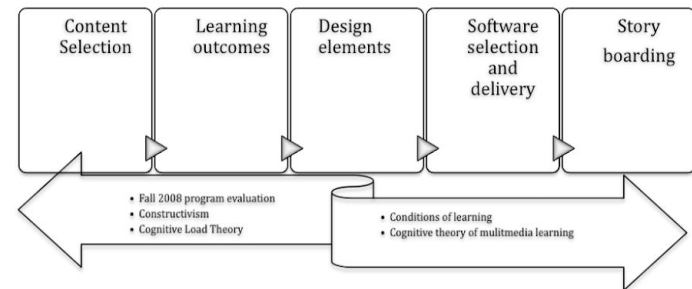


Figure 4.1. Pilot online training model design flowchart.

# Completion & Timeframe for Modules

- > Learning objectives assigned to each module;
- > Estimate of completion time for activities;
- > Tracking via online platform (i.e., LMS tracking tools)

## Module Completion Timeframe and Mechanism

Bronson University Office of Residence  
Life



Incomplete



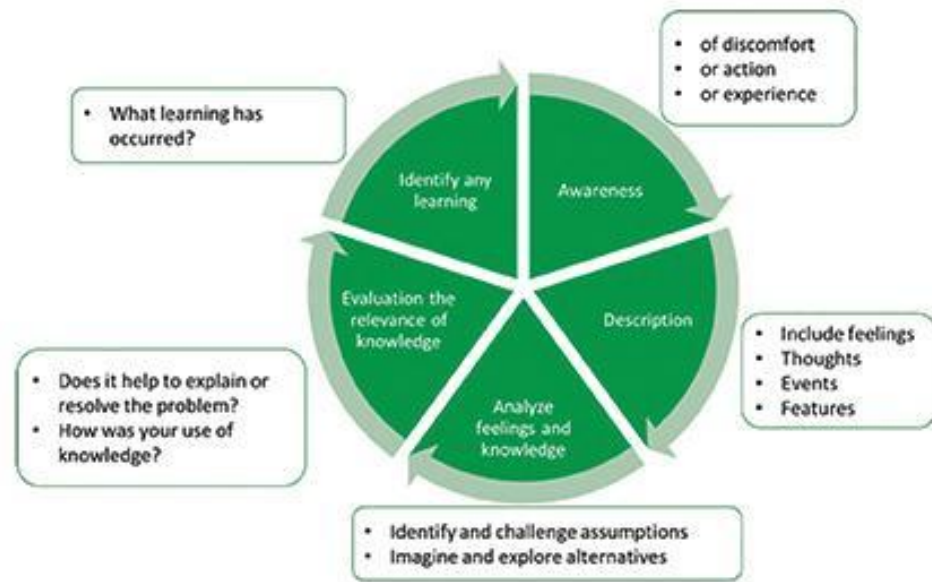
Completed

	Objectives	Measurements	Current		Initiatives
			Minutes	Activity	
Equity Diversity, & Inclusion	<i>Understand and define what microaggressions are</i>	<i>Watch the microaggression videos</i>	30 mins	✓	<i>To explore how stereotypes link to prejudice and discrimination</i>
	<i>Reflect on privilege and power</i>	<i>Discussion on Types of Oppression, Target Groups, and Non-Target Groups</i>	50 mins	✗	<i>To build personal awareness on values, beliefs, and biases that could affect behavior and positionality</i>
	<i>Understand and define terminology with social identities</i>	<i>Complete the social identity wheel</i>	60 mins	✗	<i>To create and maintain a construction dialogue on identity, social justice, and equity</i>
Marginalized Student Populations	Introduce and define key terms	<i>Understand and define equality, equity, and inclusion</i>	30 mins	✓	Foster a emphasis on access, equity, and inclusion in residence life
	Identify barriers faced by traditionally marginalized students	Read scholarly articles on Critical Race and Student Development Theory	50 mins	✗	Engage in intentional and regular conversations about the safety and needs of marginalized populations
	Highlight strategies, tools, feedback, and participant data to address barriers faced by traditionally marginalized students	Develop student/participant centered initiatives and programming	60 mins	✗	Solicit and use students' feedback before, during, and after events/projects



# Assessment of the New Topics

- > Need to assess topics as RA's go through online modules;
- > Have RA's reflect on the topics that they complete and the information they are learning;
- > The reflections will allow Residence Life staff to include more topics, exclude certain topics, adjust online format, etc.



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## **Narrative: Topics for Residence Life Training**

### **Introduction**

At Bronson University, the Office of Residence Life provides resident assistant (RA) training that covers essential topics for the role, including Programming, Diversity and Inclusion, and Sexual Assault and Harassment, among other topics. However, as colleges and universities begin to focus in on their priorities and the number of first-year students living on-campus continues to increase, an opportunity presents itself to cover more topics within the training. Tasked with identifying what new topics could potentially be added to Bronson University's RA training, Beatrice DeBelen, Natalia Esquivel Silva, and Steven Bird compiled a list of eight new topics important for the development of RAs. These topics include Marginalized Student Populations, Conflict Resolution, Alcohol and Drugs, and Effective Communication and Professionalism, among other topics.

These new topics are provided to the Office of Residence Life in a presentation titled Proposed Topics for Residence Life Training, and includes a brief outline of each topic and what may be covered. Additionally, these new additions to the RA training will be crafted into a series of online module activities that reinforce the RA Training, cultivate professional development, and further enrich RA's academic, cultural, interpersonal, emotional, and moral growth. Ideally, each topic and their online modules will be assessed at the end, providing RAs who have successfully completed the modules an opportunity to reflect on their experiences during the training and provide recommendations on improving the overall training.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

While the current training does take into consideration topics involving diversity and inclusion, student affairs professionals are more often than not reimagining and shift their perspectives on these topics. More importantly, professionals are beginning to include equity and what that may look like when discussion opportunities for inclusion and understanding diversity. For RAs, it is vital to be aware of power, privilege, and how those two can affect the student experience. RAs need to be able to respond to their students' needs, as well as understand all students develop their own identities, and at times associate with multiple identities (i.e., queer student of color). To better prepare and promote the understanding of equity and its relationship to social justice and diversity, this topic on equity, diversity, and inclusion will cover 1) what microaggressions are and how RAs can prevent microaggressions, 2) what privilege is and how RAs can talk about and break down barriers surround privilege, 3) resources available for teaching and supporting these conversations.

### **Marginalized Student Populations**

Student populations within colleges and universities are becoming increasingly diverse; with the interactions between multiple identities, and students exploring what those identities mean to them and how that shapes their experiences, campus communities are becoming spaces

to facilitate these journeys. According to Tate, et al. (2014), marginalized student populations broadly encompass communities who have been historically oppressed, including women, students of color, students who identify as queer, immigrants, students with disabilities, older students, and well as students who come from a low-income background. While these communities are not an exhaustive list, it is important for RAs to recognize the communities that their residents may be a part of, as well as the understanding that they may be a part of multiple communities or may be navigating their identities in its entirety. With the topic on marginalized student populations, RAs will be able to understand what the different student populations are and how intersectionality plays an important role, as well as the difference between equality, equity, and social justice.

### **Conflict Resolution**

“Conflict exists in every aspect of our lives, including the workplace” (Watson, et al., 2018, p. 2). As a result, it is important to be aware of the potential for conflict to exist in every space, as well reasons as to why the conflict may arise in the first place (i.e., campus climate, culture, roommate negotiations and disagreements) (Watson, et al., 2018). While much of the literature focuses on how faculty and staff can improve their understanding of conflict and resolution strategies, RAs are uniquely positioned such that conflict resolution trainings would be just as important. RAs have the opportunity to practice conflict resolution strategies and techniques at a higher rate than other student staff groups, thus benefiting from an in-depth training on the topic. Ideally, the topic on conflict resolution would cover a broad range of strategies and techniques that RAs can put into practice with their residents, including 1) how to handle conflict effectively when it involves residents-to-residents, residents-to-staff, and even residents-to-RAs, 2) different approaches to conflict resolution (i.e., cooperating and compromising), 3) feeling more confident in their role as a mediator, and 4) how to create a space for effective dialogue between all parties involved.

### **Counseling and Referral Training**

According to Taub, et al. (2013), resident assistants (RAs) “interact with students more than [any] other student affairs professionals and are therefore in a position to intervene more directly in students’ lives” (p. 65). As such, RAs are able to provide support when needed by their residents, as well as better position themselves as ‘gatekeepers’ for when a resident does need that emotional or mental comfort (Taub, et al., 2013). Because of the inherent role as ‘natural helpers’, it is important for RAs, whether new or returning, to have a better understanding of counseling and referring strategies and techniques. These strategies and techniques take on a variety of forms, including understanding when a student needs a physical reminder that the RA is there for them (i.e., taking the student to lunch) or a non-verbal reminder (i.e., letting the student know that they are there and to listen to the student). Ideally, this topic on counseling and referrals would better equip RAs to 1) recognize the role they play when counseling or referring students to other resources, 2) better support grieving students, 3) confidently intervene with at-risk students when and if necessary, 4) adequately refer students to other resources, even if



off-campus, and 5) provide a social network that students feel safe, comfortable, and confident with.

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

Colleges and universities are slowly transitioning to post-admittance, yet pre-first day, student assessments on alcohol and drugs. As part of the orientation experience for many colleges and universities, first-year and transfer students are required to complete a form of Alcohol 101, where they learn about their campuses alcohol and drug policies. For RAs, this may need to be expanded upon at a more in-depth level; it is important for RAs to understand what impact alcohol and drugs may have on their residents, as well as how to intervene and refer their residents when necessary. According to Thombs, et al. (2014), “[h]istorically, the training of RAs has not been an evidence-informed practice[, and the] lack of investment in systematic development [...] is surprising given the longstanding recognition that RAs are not well-prepared to address the challenging situations they encounter [...] (p. 515). When visualizing this topic on alcohol and drugs, it is hoped that RAs have a 1) better understanding of the impact alcohol and drugs has on residents, 2) better understanding of when to intervene and refer their residents to on- and off-campus resources, and 3) be more comfortable and confident enforcing university policies related to on-campus alcohol and drug consumption.

### **Social Media and Technology**

According to Chan (2017), students who utilize social media more often than not is associated with increased levels of academic performance, persistence, and a larger social network. Additionally, students who utilize social media have shown to be more involved in student organizations throughout campus, have stronger connections to other students, and have an increased satisfaction with their overall college experience (2017). However, this may not always be the case, and RAs need to be able to understand the benefits of social media, as well as its impact and how to help their residents properly manage their priorities connected with social media. With the topic on social media and technology, RAs should 1) have an understanding of the pros and cons involving social media and technology, 2) be able to support their residents manage their time on social media, 3) how social media and technology can impact their residents’ identity development and student growth, and 4) be confident in helping their residents navigate their attitudes and development involving social media.

### **Work, Life, and Finance Balance**

The purpose of this section in the residents’ training is to prepare residents to be able to juggle the many conflicting demands of life as an RA. This session would start off by having students complete a timelog tracking how their time is usually spent in a typical week. They will be given an example of a students schedule and be asked to create a schedule that would show the student using their time effectively.

College students have to be able to prioritize their responsibilities to manage their time. Students must be able to use their time efficiently to complete activities necessary for academic and personal growth. Students must be able to judge the amount of time needed to complete a

task. They must be able to figure out the level of urgency of an activity/task.

### **Effective Communication and Professionalism**

In this section of the training, the goal is to prepare residents to understand their individuality and develop an understanding of what professionalism is. To begin, we would have student complete the [Myers Briggs](#) Assessment (Elevate® assessment site, 2019). Through this self-reported questionnaire, residents will learn about the viewpoint they take on situations and how they make decisions. Both of those factors are useful to understand before starting any job or internship, so that the resident is aware of their own leadership and communication style. Students must learn how to conduct themselves in a professional manner toward the people around them. This will help them prepare for the life in a professional setting. Students must learn to judge speak/action that is appropriate for foster relationships. Being able to identify nonverbal communication like body language, gestures and verbal communication such as vocal inflection.

### **Online Format, Completion & Timeframe, and Assessment**

These new topics will be covered in an online format constructed using Bronson University's learning management system/software (LMS). Each topic will be captured in a online module where the Office of Residence Life will provide resources and articles related to the topics, online activities, as well as benchmarks to assess RA understanding and completion. Ideally, this new addition to the training will be in an asynchronous format, where RAs work at their own pace and complete the topics on their own time; these modules will not replace, but rather accompany, the in-person trainings offered by the Office of Residence Life. With an online format, the Office of Residence Life can still foster a productive and positive community that allows for growth and development for the RAs. With the use of online discussions forums and boards, RAs can continuously communicate with each other.

At the end of each module, RAs will have the opportunity to reflect on their online experiences and the topics covered. This opportunity will allows RAs a chance to actively engage in think and identify areas of growth for these topics, trainings, as well as the Office of Residence Life.

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