

A photograph of a large, multi-story brick building with Gothic architectural features, including a prominent central tower with a green spire and large arched windows. Bare tree branches are visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the building. The overall scene is slightly hazy or overcast.

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Meet the Team:
Bronson University Residence Life Staff



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Purpose and Goal

Purpose Statement

Our group has the task of proposing a set of online training modules that could be developed for our next RA training session. At this point, our department wants us to propose a set of ideas that could work well in an online format, not focusing cost or difficulty.

Goal Statement

We approached this project with the idea of providing a variety of modules that could be beneficial at any institution. We focused on three primary goals for our content, which are:

1. Unique content
2. Hybrid approaches
3. Cost-saving measures

Goal	Opportunities	Modules	Color Key	Theory
1) Unique content	Exploring social identities	ESAs and Service Animals, Religion and Spirituality, Social Identity, Contemporary Issue	Blue	Section 1 All Blue + BCD Prep
2) Hybrid approaches	Providing content that continues in RA training	BCD Prep RA Working Agreement	Yellow	
3) Cost-saving	Covering basic content online	Social Media, Facilities, Professional Relationships	Orange	Section 2 All Orange + RA Working Agreement

Explanation of Approach

Legal Issues to Consider

Training Responsibility

In training, the university has a responsibility to ensure that all employees have a basic understanding of their role and responsibilities ⁸

Copyright Law

When creating an online training, universities should consider acknowledging others' content under fair use, while considering copyright for their own content ¹⁴

Student's Online Presence

With the advent of technology, policy and regulations around a student employee's presence online need to be updated or considered ¹³

Theories That Apply To All Modules

Effective Online Practices^{9, 11}

- Online modules should:
 - cover foundational knowledge
 - not replace face-to-face content
 - have a clear, consistent structure
 - be short and digestible

*Kolb's Experiential Learning Model*⁷

- Everyone learns in different ways, modules help make learning more inclusive
- We suggest a reflection portion to the modules since, “after reflection, a student will internalize the learning process and develop abstract concepts about his or her experiences”¹²

Assessment across the modules

- Assessment will enhance the modules over time to ensure that they achieve their goals
- Staff “should be identifying ways to integrate assessment into the activity, program, or service, making it a seamless component”⁵

Preparing Online Modules - Professional Tips

Before the RAs even begin taking the online modules, it is important to provide some structure. These tips should be used when creating the website and when sending the content to RAs.

First, the content should exist on a singular site that can track completion and assessment results. Having the content in a central location has advantages over series of YouTube videos because real time evaluation and assessment can address issues as they occur.

Second, the website should include an orientation portion that would prepare the staff members. Such an orientation will provide an outline of the content, introduce the professional staff, and provide some inspirational motivation for completing the training.

Some ideas to potentially include in an introduction/orientation are:

- An explanation of how to navigate the module site
- A short 1-2 minute “introduction” video of the director of the head of the training committee
- A TedTalk such as: Drew Dudley’s Everyday leadership - on “Lollipop Moments”
- A few tips and tricks on how to stay engaged

Section 1

Theories for Section 1

Section 1 modules focus on helping RAs develop an awareness of various social identities. The complex nature of social identities means that there are multiple, nuanced theories which apply to the modules within this section. Modules outlined in Section 1 also focus on situating RAs to reflect on their personal journey and understanding of social identities, while learning about others who hold identities different from their own.

Overarching Theories for Group 1:

King and Kitchener's Reflective Judgement Model: focuses on student development in reflective practices. All of the modules in section 1 encompass reflection of self, beliefs, peers and surroundings.⁶

Specific Theories that connect various modules in Group 1:

Social Model of Disability: focuses on situating disability in the social context of society²

- ESAs and Service Animals, Autism Spectrum Disorder

Fowler's Theory of Faith Development: focuses on developing faith in a community of others³

- Religion and Spirituality

Critical Race Theory: centers issues of power and context in relation to social identities¹⁰

- Social Identity, Contemporary Issues

ESAs and Service Animals

Purpose

One topic that campuses of higher education can better address at the undergraduate staff level is the topic of Emotional Support Animals (ESA) and service animals in the halls. Although there is a lot of legal and political aspects to this topic, this module will focus on preparing the staff to act in accordance with the university policies and expectations.

Content

This module could be created by the university departments that focus on issues of access and accommodation. It will provide resources that can be referenced easily at a later date, which may come in handy for situations that would traditionally be unclear to an undergraduate staff member. If available, one way to enhance this module would be to have someone who has experience owning or working with approved animals share their perspectives.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. define the basic institutional policy on ESAs and service animals
2. understand their role as an RA when it comes to encountering an animal in the hall
3. reference available resources related to access, rights, and accommodations

Religion and Spirituality

Purpose

One of the major areas of development for young adults in college environments is religion and spirituality. This module would provide a general introduction to religion and spirituality topics, specifically focusing on ways that an RA can create an inclusive community and promote dialogue on their floors.

Content

The module will outline the institution's policies surrounding religion and spirituality as well as religiously affiliated organizations on campus. This module may also serve to further explore the role of religion at a private institution. On the other hand, public institutions could use this module to open conversations about religion and spirituality. General examples for how RAs can be more inclusive on their floors (e.g. door decorations, common area decorations, and celebrating different seasons) will also be included in this module.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. engage in a conversation about religion and spirituality
2. create bulletin boards and door decs that are culturally sensitive
3. explain the university's approach to religion (whether non-secular or religion-specific)

Underrepresented Identity

Purpose

A Underrepresented Identity module will focus on underrepresented identities which higher education often overlooks or forgets. This module has the ability to rotate on a year to year basis to cover a variety of underrepresented identities. An overarching aspect to address within this module is the importance of recognizing the issues involved with making assumptions about other individuals. It is unfair to that individual to jump to conclusions.

Content

For the “year one” implementation of this online training, we would cover Autism Spectrum Disorder. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder may not disclose this information to an RA *and* this module would help to prepare RAs to working with people who may hold this identity. Information to cover would include:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is different for every person
- You may not know, unless the student discloses to you directly, that a student is on the spectrum
- If a parent were to disclose to you that their child has Autism Spectrum Disorder, how would knowing this affect your relationship with that student?

“More than half of young adults with autism remain unemployed and unenrolled in higher education in the two years after high school. This is a lower rate than that of young adults in other disability categories, including learning disabilities, intellectual disability or speech-language impairment.”¹

Contemporary Issue

Purpose

A Contemporary Issue module will present a current issue at either the local, regional, or national level and provide a space for RAs discussion about topics that may impact their lives or the lives of their residents. This module can be adjusted to address “hot topics” so that new issues can be fore fronted and discussed each year. The module would promote dialogue and encourage deeper thought about how these issues may affect students on campus.

Content

For example, the contemporary issue that we would suggest for the first year would be:

Immigration & DACA: Supporting Our Students Who Are Undocumented

- Explore the DREAM Resource Guide, adapted from DePaul University, via a guided facilitation presented by the residence life staff and/or a guest speaker
- Learn about the federal and state laws surrounding immigration
- Identify on-campus resources that undocumented students can utilize
- Examine the possible stressors facing undocumented students

Section 2

Theories for Section 2

Section 2 modules cover general and foundational training topics in a different format in order to be more inclusive with RAs' learning styles. It allows RAs to move at their own pace. These modules can be a resource for RAs to refer back to later.

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences:

- “On most college campuses and learning environments, the logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences are often favored over the other five” (musical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal)⁴
- More inclusive with general training material so that those who are not linguistic learners can also participate in an accessible manner

Risk management approach:

- Providing resources for future reference increases efficacy of the learner
- Covering the baseline knowledge in an online format ensures all employees learn vital information⁸

The RA Working Agreement

Revisiting the working agreements (RA contracts) annually with RAs can be a tedious task. Covering it in an online format can save time and effort better spent elsewhere. Having a Working Agreement module allows RAs to:

1. Read through the contract at their own pace
2. Take notes, pause, and rewind through sections they may need refreshers on
3. Have a resource to refer back to if they have questions about the Working Agreement
4. Understand the basic requirements for tasks such as bulletin boards and door decorations

Additional Opportunities for Engagement:

- Have a returning RAs star in the module - RAs will be more attentive to the video when the material is being told to them by their peers rather than by their supervisors
- Encourage the RAs to take note of any questions they have - a Question and Answer session could be provided during In-Person Training

Social Media

A Social Media module will achieve two purposes:

1

It outlines the departmental policies related to social media use as a staff member

E.g. the professional dangers of posting photos showing use or abuse of alcohol and/or drugs.

2

It provides tips and tricks on how to use social media as a community building tool.

E.g. how to organize a GroupMe or Facebook page for their students (or other niche social media platforms)

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. reference the social media policy on the housing website
2. identify 1-3 social media tools/apps that they can use on their floor
3. edit or update their personal and public social media to be more professional

Facilities

A facilities module will be straight forward; it provides the school's protocols and procedures that are relevant to the RA. The benefit to having an online facilities module is that the provided information will be available to the staff as a reference for future situations. Some topics to include are:



How to submit a work order or facilities request



What students do if they have a building issue and what their role is as an RA



What are common facilities emergencies and how to respond

- Flooding, Fire Alarms, Earthquake Drills, Tornado Watch vs. Warning, etc.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. reference departmental expectations when dealing with facilities emergencies
2. submit relevant paperwork in a timely and professional manner

Professional Relationships

For many students the RA position is the first job they have had. Addressing the difference between friendships, romantic partnerships, and professional relationships is an essential part of the RA position and is a topic that is well suited for online learning. RAs will work with other students who are of a similar age and they will be living where they work. It is important for an RA to understand that they are both an employee *and* they have the responsibility of a floor of students. This module outlines the departmental expectations of professional relationships. It will be important for RAs to understand the power dynamics and professional relationships associated with their role.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

1. recognize the different relationships that are present in the workplace
2. define their own professional boundaries
3. use critical thinking skills to define their own boundaries within their roles as RAs

Assessment ⁵

(Formative) Assessing RA learning

- There will be a reflection component at the end of each module
- For social identity modules (i.e. Autism) we will use open ended question format
- For technical modules (i.e. Facilities) we will use multiple choice quizzes

(Summative) Assessing effectiveness

- A survey will go out to the RAs afterwards
- We can debrief during RA training
 - What went well?
 - What were the challenges?
- We will take note of the types of questions RA have about content in modules

Wrapping Up

Online module learning can enhance and further prepare RAs to fulfill and excel in their roles. When used as a resource in conjunction with in-person training, the online learning experience can further promote learning and development for RAs.

The generalizability of our modules allows the provided content to be adapted to fit a variety of institutions (large, small, private, public, urban, rural, etc.)

The educational value of our modules to the greater organization of Student Affairs lies in supporting our Resident Assistants to become more well rounded, mindful, caring leaders. Our modules are grounded in theory to promote student development, reflection, and learning.

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Bronson University Module Case Study

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Bronson University Module Case Study

Welcome to our expositional, supplemental, super-fantastic paper that is meant to accompany the PowerPoint slides we created for the 2019 Student Affairs Case Study competition. This paper focuses on some of the more specific and nuanced aspects of our approach. We do not restate what is already written in the PowerPoint. Instead, we expand on specific points that would be too much to explain through the use of the slides.

In this paper, there are two major themes. In the first theme, we outline some of the additional things that we think should be covered when considering the design of the online module training. The second theme expands upon the specific choices we made related to the modules themselves.

Theme One: Clarifying Modules

Our approach moved from broad to specific over the course of developing the presentation. We brainstormed a very large list of potential ideas, narrowed them down to a set of nine modules, and then refined each idea. Eventually, we reached a point where each module felt specific enough to be pertinent to RA knowledge, while also generalizable to a variety of differing institutions. After finalizing our modules we then organized them into two sections based on the type of learning we wanted RAs to accomplish: social skills and technical skills. These sections were aligned with a few theories each in order to tie theoretical ideas with our practical approach.

The idea behind each module is that the module will last no more than ten to fifteen minutes in order to maintain the RAs focus and allow for enough content to be presented for the RAs to reflect on. As stated in the presentation, each module will have some aspect of assessment to gauge student learning and also learn what type of modules are effective for online

learning, as this is a new implementation. The modules would be opened for the RAs to start and to complete the post-module assessments during the last couple of weeks of the Spring Semester. Then, the modules would be due prior to the in-person training at the end of the summer. This would give the RAs ample time to complete the modules over the summer.

Theme Two: Expanding on Choices of Modules

Within our presentation, there are two modules that we indicated would rotate on a year to year basis. These modules are the “Underrepresented Identity” and “Contemporary Issue” modules. We chose the Underrepresented Identity module because we feel it is important to acknowledge and engage student identities that exist within the minority and are often brushed aside. For the first year, the underrepresented identity that we chose was students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This is an identity that was not only suggested in the Case Study but is an identity we also feel RAs would benefit from learning about. How RAs interact with students with ASD, as well as knowing that ASD does not appear similarly in any two individuals is a topic we felt needed to be highlighted. To keep online module training interesting as well as engaging for returning RAs, we would suggest new topics every year, depending on gaps or needs that can be identified throughout the year

One could argue that Religion and Spirituality would fall under the Underrepresented Identity module. A key distinction that we note between these two modules is that the Religion and Spirituality module would focus on the RA’s ability to foster discussion and inclusivity within a residence hall environment. The Underrepresented Identity module focuses more closely on how to work and engage with a specific student demographic. For example, an Underrepresented Identity module could focus on Muslim students and learning about their

religion and culture whereas the Religion and Spirituality module would focus on making all students, regardless of religious or spiritual affiliation, feel welcome on the floor community.

The other module we chose to have rotated on a yearly basis is the Contemporary Issue module. This module would focus on whichever contemporary issue was highlighted for the year. In our case, we selected the topic of Immigration and DACA to provide RAs with information about what is currently happening in our nation and how residents they work with could be impacted by this issue. Within our society, there are many “hot topic” issues that arise throughout the year, and we feel that it is our responsibility as supervisors and educators to highlight a current issue which is affecting the university, community, or larger global population. There is a high chance that an RA will work with students who are either directly or indirectly impacted by whatever contemporary issue is chosen any given year.

Conclusion

Well, that’s all folks... thank you for taking the time to consider our submission for this national case study competition! We hope that his paper helped provide better insight and understanding into the rationale and decisions behind our case study. With all things considered, we learned a lot about our own team dynamics from this project, and we certainly learned even more about the potential of online trainings. We look forward to browsing the other submissions from our peers across the nation!