Division of Student Affairs High Impact Practices (HIP)
Cover Sheet 2013

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Name of HIP: Resident Advisor Experience
Approximate # of TAMU students involved in the HIP: 145

Please check the TAMU learning outcome(s) associated with this HIP:

Bachelor’s:  □ Master the depth of knowledge required of a degree
         ☒ Demonstrate critical thinking
         ☒ Communicate effectively
         ☒ Practice personal and social responsibility
         ☒ Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence
         ☒ Prepare to engage in lifelong learning
         ☒ Work collaboratively

Master’s:  □ Master the degree program requirements
         □ Apply subject matter knowledge
         □ Communicate effectively
         □ Use appropriate technologies
         □ Develop clear research plans
         ☒ Choose ethical course of action

Doctoral:  □ Master the degree program requirements
         □ Apply a variety of strategies and tools
         □ Communicate effectively
         □ Develop clear research plans
         □ Use appropriate technologies
         □ Teach and explain the subject matter

Please check the QEP learning outcome(s) associated with this HIP:

☒ Improve student learning by developing habits and skills for lifelong learning — Curiosity, Initiative, Independence, Transfer, Reflection
☐ Improve student learning by developing habits and skills for integrative learning — Connections to experience, Connections to discipline, Transfer, Integrated communication, Reflection and self-assessment
Abstract

The Resident Advisor (RA) is a member of the Residence Education team within the Department of Residence Life (DRL) in the Division of Student Affairs. The overall mission of Residence Education is to enhance the living environment of staff and students through education and development. The RAs focuses on building inclusive communities that focus on learning, leadership, and meaningful relationships through their development as well as that of our students. In support of the mission of Texas A&M University, RAs are committed to fostering a positive environment within the Residence Halls through incorporating the Texas A&M University Core Values of Excellence, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Respect, and Selfless Service in their work. We define a positive community as an environment which fosters healthy lifestyle choices by its members, respect for individual values and beliefs, a sense of belonging, and a focus on academic success and personal growth which will contribute to our students developing as leaders of characters dedicated to serving the greater good.

Description of the activity

a) **Invest time and effort to purposeful tasks. Please describe the length of time of the experience.**

The Resident Advisor experience lasts a total of 9-12 months from the time they are selected to completion of their contract. Some RAs renew their contract to stay on additional months/years.

Training – RAs attend a fall training ranging from 7-9 days and a spring training ranging from 2-4 days at the beginning of each semester. Topics ranging from community development to QPR are covered during that time and at the end of the training each RA is asked to evaluate the sessions.

Duty – RAs are on duty at least once a week from 5p-8a in order to monitor the condition of the facility and address resident concerns as they arise. Often the RA on duty will have to deal with facilities’ crises, hall policy violations and other assorted emergencies. The RA will have to objectively document the situation utilizing the Maxient report system, follow up with those residents involved and communicate up to supervisors within the duty matrix.

Programming – During training the RAs learn about the Residential Student Engagement Model (RStEM). The three main focus areas of the RStEM include: community, social and personal responsibility, and academic success. Utilizing the format, they are charged with provided programs that engage students within their community. They must complete a Pre-Event Planning Form, mitigate any risks involved in the event, obtain funding for the event through a peer approval process, market for the event, execute and evaluate the event.
One-on-one meetings with supervisor - RAs meet either weekly or biweekly with a supervisor. During this time they work on their personal and professional development and receive feedback about their job performance.

Developing relationships with residents – RAs are required to, at a minimum, be acquainted with their residents. At times these relationships can develop into lifelong friendships. RAs serve as peer mentors and may provide counseling to residents on a variety of topics. Often RAs serve as a resource and help connect students to offices or services provided on campus.

b) Interact with staff, advisors, and/or faculty about substantive matters usually over extended periods of time.

Staff meetings – Weekly developmental and informative meetings led by the Graduate Hall Director (GHD) or Community Director (CD) of that hall. It’s a time to share about incidents and occurrences within the hall and to receive feedback from their peers and supervisors. The meeting serves as a time to plan and prepare for upcoming events.

Evaluations – Over the course of the year there are frequent informal evaluations held during 1:1 meetings between the RA and his/her supervisor. At the end of each semester, a formal evaluation is held which can impact his/her future employment and possibility of a pay raise.

Program planning – When RAs are in charge of an event in the hall they are responsible for the planning, marketing, risk management, and evaluation of said event. This process often includes collaborating with a fellow RA and receiving feedback from peers and supervisors. It can also include collaborating with faculty, other staff, and residents.

c) Interact with peers about substantive matters usually over extended periods of time.

Community Building – The overall process by which an RA cultivates relationships with and among residents. The process may involve informal social interactions, confrontation of policy violations, and the hosting of social or educational programs. Community building is the backbone of the RA experience.

Floor meetings – At least once a semester, the RA meets with the entirety of his or her floor in order to pass on important information for the semester and to interact with residents in both a formal and informal manner.

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d) Experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves

Resident Advisors have frequent interactions with students, faculty, and staff who are different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, political stances, religions, sexual orientations, abilities, etc... It is an expectation that an RA is accepting of all backgrounds and promotes an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding within the community. RAs are offered the opportunity to expand their knowledge of people who are different from themselves through numerous trainings throughout their experience: Social Justice Training, Aggie Ally, Green Dot, QPR, etc...

Through our programming model RAs have the opportunity to expand both their own knowledge and thinking as well as impact the residents in their community.

e) Receive frequent feedback about their performance – both formal and informal – in settings that allow them to respond to that feedback

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One-on-One with Supervisors – Weekly or biweekly meetings between the RA and his/her supervisor where they can discuss performance issues, goals, upcoming programming, resident interactions, and staff dynamics.

Formal Evaluations – The RA meets with his/her supervisor near the end of the semester to assess their performance in the position. This evaluation is utilized in ascertaining who deserves a pay raise and is kept in their official student worker file.

f) Are provided opportunities to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge gained from their classroom/discipline to their co-curricular experience and vice versa. Students are provided opportunities to discover the relevance of learning through application and practice in a range of contexts.

Due to the vast range of skills utilized in the RA position, students from any academic discipline should be able to relate their formal classroom experience to the position and vice versa. As stated above, the RA position is designed to meet six of the seven undergraduate learning outcomes.

g) Are provided opportunities to become aware of their values and beliefs and thus to better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world.

- Through programming in the residence halls
- Sharing their personal beliefs in a manner that encourages respect and acceptance.
• Creating and maintaining a community of respect with residents from all over the world
• Promoting involvement in other campus groups, organizations, and activities which highlight social justice concerns
• Passive programming and education through bulletin boards and other media

Assessment

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