



“UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY” ANNUAL RESIDENT ASSISTANT TRAINING

Presented By:

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Training RAs

Prior to the opening of the Resident Halls in the fall, all the Resident Assistants are called back to campus early to undergo an extensive training. This year the theme of the training was “Unity in the Community” and focused on the Resident Assistants’ role in creating a welcoming, safe, and nurturing student environment that emphasizes student learning.

Inherent to the success of those goals is the ability for the Resident Assistants to come together as a supportive team. To facilitate this they participated in multiple tasks and activities that forced teamwork, trust building, disclosure and utilization of individual’s skills. The group of 9 stayed in the same facility for 10 days; eating, training, relaxing, and preparing together.

Essential to the work of the Resident Assistants is the ability to respect all students, to be an effect team member, to have understanding of all university resources, to respond to critical situations appropriately, and to act as a leader among students. These principles were taught through collaboration between different campus divisions, namely Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Finance and Administration, and also community members. The RA Team participated in active training with numerous staff and administrator both to gain understanding of the material, but also to gain comfort with multiple resources on campus.

A Closer Look (Training Excursions)

was a trip to Camp Whittier in Santa Barbara County. The camp is in a remote and scenic location and allowed for the team to break away from their hectic lives and begin to focus on the job ahead of them. The team slept in humble accommodations and spent a full day on a high ropes course. The tasks on the course were seemingly impossible and many could not be accomplished without the utilization of fellow team members, encouragement, and compromise. All of which are directly relational to the position that they would be taking on in two short weeks. The second trip was a week later as the team headed out to a local fruit farm. At the time of the trip the RAs had already spent many hours preparing themselves for the upcoming year and had been training to meet the resident’s needs. The trip to the farm was designed as both a mental respite from constant, new information, while allowing the RAs time to connect with team members and actively reflect on what had been learned. While those activities were taking place, RAs were picking fruit that they later used to make jam. “RA Jellin’ Jam” was given to all presenters of RA training. You will see the outcomes, as given by the RAs, below.



Understanding Residents

Time is spent introducing the Resident Assistants to the students of today. RAs learn who the residents are psychologically, socially, and physiologically through journal articles, the Beloit College’s report on Student Mindset and discussions lead by University leaders of



education and human development. Through this knowledge, RAs are better able to anticipate and respond to resident’s needs. Various campus leaders are asked to participate in diversity training and competency. Resident assistants are educated on not only the prejudices of others, but also how their own ethnocentrism affects their actions.

In order to meet the co-curricular needs of the residents, Resident Assistants take what they learn about the modern student and pair that information with the Dimensions of Development to provide activities that fit the resident’s needs. Extensive time is allocated to interdisciplinary training through the utilization of many different campus constituents. Each RA is charged with creating 6 original events created through the guidance provided by the Dimensions of Development.

RAs come to understand that they are always looked to as a role model and fellow student, helping to establish trust and cohesion in the community. Residents look to them for guidance and peer counseling and referral to campus psychological services. Resident Assistants are trained to be sensitive and respectful of all students and respond diligently to issues as they become aware of them.

RAs gain skill in how to effectively handle crisis and emergency situations through workshops, panels, question and answer periods, scenarios and lectures by the University Police, the Division of Student Affairs and community volunteers. The Ventura Narcotics Task Force presents information in the mode of stories, and visual aids to educate the team on the signs and paraphernalia of substance abuse. RAs are also provided with information on local services and agencies designed to provide assistance in crisis and emergency situations.

Through the use of pre-test and post test we were able to evaluate the learning that took place during the extensive 10 day training period. As a program, “Unity in the Community” effectively improved understanding in the expressed objectives.



- Some berries don’t come off the vines as easily as others, but that doesn’t mean those other berries will never be ready. –Rachael Jordan
- It’s not always easy, but the rewards are great and make it worth it in the end. –Dallas Carter
- The berries, although from different rows, create something delicious when put together. –Garrett Brownfield
- The best berries are usually hidden behind the leaves. –Curtis DeBoni
- Don’t judge a berry on looks alone, you have to feel how it reacts to pressure. –Eric Suliga
- Just because a berry isn’t ripe doesn’t mean it has no purpose. –Kelli McGuire
- Sometimes you don’t notice a berry until you see it from a different angle. –Marissa Allen
- Each berry is different in its shape, size, color, and texture. We should love and respect each one for its diversity. –Amy Woodmansee
- Sometimes it takes another person with a different perspective to identify a ripe berry. –Cris Powell