



## Hello & Happy Holidays!

As we approach the middle of the academic year, we hope you are finding time on your campuses to reflect and recharge for the remainder of the 2014-2015 academic year!

We are looking forward to seeing you at the 2015 ACPA Convention! The Commission for Housing & Residential Life (CHRL) directorate body has been busy this fall creating professional development opportunities for our commission members and looking ahead to future opportunities for CHRL members. In this newsletter, we've outlined a lessons learned on Title IX investigations, winter break closing in residence halls, and programming in upper-class communities. We also outlined information about CHRL elections and sponsored programs for the 2015 Convention. Happy reading!

## Get Involved!

There are many opportunities within the CHRL working groups to experience something new, give back to the commission membership, and share your expertise. Write an article! CHRL newsletters will be sent to members once every other month. The next newsletter will be sent in February! [Submit an article!](#) Share your expertise! Tell us about a new initiative on your campus!

*We wish you all the best as you work toward winter break closing!*



# Update from Commission Chair

*Greetings,*

The semester (for many of us) is almost wrapped up. I suspect everyone would say that we've worked hard and time seemed to have flown by. Amazing how that happens. The commission's been busy the past few months. If you've not yet done so, please take time to check out (or add to) our new(er) blog

<http://acpahousing.wordpress.com/>. Our hope is that folks will find this a useful place to post lessons learned and best practices. Though I'm no expert, I'm told that useful blog entries 1) identify the issue; discuss what we done to address the issue (or what could be done); and closes with outcomes or potential outcomes. If you have time, put your university's efforts out there – policy, programs, etc. It's a great way for us to continue to build our professional community!

Over the next month or so, we'll be getting geared up for conference. Hard to believe, isn't it? We're set with sponsored programs, developing the outline for our open meeting (to which you are all invited) and getting our social together (again, come one, come all)! Please save the following dates/times:

- **Open Meeting:**

Saturday, March 7, 2015 11am-12pm

Location: TBA – see program book

- **CHRL/OCM Social:**

Friday, March 6, 2015 at 9:30pm (tentative)

Location: TBA

Enjoy yourselves over the next few weeks! The new year will be upon us soon!

*Amy Franklin-Craft, Ph.D.*



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# Vote in Commission Elections!

*Dear Commission Members,*

It is time to elect new CHRL leadership. We have a number of outstanding candidates; I encourage you to read their bios on our web page at <http://www.myacpa.org/commission-housing-and-residence-life-directorate-elections>

The election will close at 11:59 p.m. (EST) on December 19, 2014. Please vote at

<http://members.myacpa.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/question/question.html?>

[Action=Display\\_Questionnaire](#). Also, please note that the ballots will time out in 30 minutes from the time you log in.

Please contact Aleasha Mayo at [amayo@acpa.nche.edu](mailto:amayo@acpa.nche.edu) with any technical questions during this process.

*Thank you for your your time.*

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**CHRL Election Coordinators**



*\* Photo courtesy of [Michael & Christa Richert](#)*

## Programming for Apartment & Upperclass Students

One group of on-campus residents that many RA's find difficult to program for are residents living in apartment style housing. Due to the physical layout of apartments and the private nature of apartment units, there can be an inherent difficulty trying to interact with and program for residents. However, through intentional programming models, trial and error, and on-going tweaks, successful programs can be accomplished.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when programming for on-campus apartment residents:

- 1. Keep Things Simple** - Sometimes we can get too "Student Affairs" with our programs in getting too complicated and, as a result, simply miss the mark on having successful student participation. Like all of us, students are social creatures and are inclined to participate in activities in which they can socialize and have fun. This does not mean that we cannot include student learning outcomes. However, keeping

things simple can lend itself to having something actually happen rather than a program that becomes too complicated and possibly not occur at all (or something that students actually would like to attend).

**2. Develop Personal Relationships** – We spend a lot of time and energy helping each incoming freshman student transition to college life. Typically RA's and professional staff members make intentional efforts during the first six weeks to get to know students on an individual level. We should apply this same level of intentional interactions with our upperclassman students. Train your RA staffers on how to develop relationships through various strategies outside of the traditional programming vehicle. While this may seem second nature to you as a professional, student staffers will need some coaching on how to do this, particularly if you do not have any "Woo's" (i.e., Strengths Finder) on your staff. Examples include messages of encouragement or simple discussion through social media avenues; invitations to attend campus functions with friends that are just for fun and not necessarily for programming credit; and door-to-door "Hello's" to see how everyone is doing on a biweekly or monthly basis.

**3. Use Alternative Means to Program** – There are times when a traditional programming approach will not work in an apartment setting. For our students living in apartments we need to consider the time, place, and manner in which a program is designed and delivered. A door-to-door program or a day-long event may prove more beneficial than a stand-alone, presentation style event. Webinars and blogs are one way in which to reach and educate students programmatically without having everyone in the same common space. "Passive" programming through bulletin boards and educational door hangers are two other alternative ways to connect with your students.

**4. Collaborate with Campus Colleagues** – Contrary to the popular ResLife belief, other departments often program as a way to reach out to our students. Many times, RA's duplicate efforts by holding similar events. Collaborating with these departments best utilizes campus resources and allows our students to get the information directly from the source rather than through an RA. Some of these departments include alumni affairs, financial aid, and career development. Collaborating also aids in the sharing of resources and developing professional relationships across campus that ultimately continue and aids in the development of future programmatic efforts.

**5. Program Based Upon Their Specific Needs** – Students living in an apartment setting usually are less dependent upon staff members. These students generally know campus resources and have been to a few if any RA events. We know that traditionally these students are upperclassman and are beginning to transition out of college. These students typically have internships off-campus and are seeking a more fulfilling role in the campus community. Below are some helpful programming ideas for our apartment dwelling students:

- **Senior Series** – Much like their incoming freshman counterparts, graduating seniors have significant transition issues to worry about during the academic year: finding a job, interviewing, resume and cover letter writing, graduate school entrance exams, graduate school search, etc. This is in addition to transition issues caused by leaving friends, moving back home, or moving to a new city. Some programming ideas surrounding a senior series, include the following: bringing off-campus business owners to a program to discuss hiring practices of employers, graduate

school admissions counselors and/or financial aid counselors to help explain the graduate school search, and alum discussing advice related to graduating and living in the “real world.”

- **Community Outreach** – Students in this generation are more engaged in their community than past generations. In every neighborhood, city, or town there are always opportunities to engage our students in civic engagement opportunities. Partnering with local shelters, after school programs, or agencies (Red Cross, United Way, Salvation Army, Big Brothers / Big Sisters) are all great ways to engage our upperclassmen who may be considering a move to an off-campus apartment.
- **Decorate Your Apartment** – This can be a fun community building activity where campus approved decorations can be created for use in the apartment. This can include door stops, posters, picture frames, chore charts, etc.
- **BBQ's/Picnics/Potlucks** – A great way to get residents out of their apartment on a nice day is to have a picnic. The more interactions people have together, the greater the likelihood of friendships being formed. Of course, be sure to follow any campus guidelines for food purchases and cooking on-campus.
- **Community Service / Civic Engagement** – There are many great ways to form impactful relationships with the local community. As mentioned before, many of our students want to get involved in the community. Why not invite the local community to go around trick-or-treating around the apartments. Other ideas include hosting a fun run for charity, and inviting a zoo or wildlife conservation center to talk about endangered species.

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## Lessons Learned: Winter Break Closing

This winter of 2014 had undoubtedly been rough on the Mid-Atlantic region. From freezing temperatures to snow closures, many of our institutions have had to brave the storm(s) so to speak. Each of our campuses is equipped with facilities staff and emergency protocols for handling natural disasters, but we are not always prepared for the natural disasters that happen inside our buildings. After all, who would ever anticipate a flood in their residence hall?

A couple of days after record breaking lows, and several days before we prepared to open for the spring semester I was sitting in my apartment when the fire alarm began to sound. I figured they were testing the system; *why else would the alarm be sounding in a vacant building?* Several minutes later I decided to investigate the cause of the

alarm. When I exited the building much to my surprise water was gushing out of the first three stories of the residence hall.

When security arrived we began walking the halls. I remember opening the door to room 306—water poured out of the doorway and down the hall like a scene from *Titanic*. The water continued to flow for nearly 30 minutes until the shutoff kicked in, meanwhile thousands of gallons of water had been released causing significant damage to several stories in our two year old residence hall. Ultimately, the extremely cold temperatures caused water in our fire sprinkler system to freeze. As the temperatures began to “warm” the pipes expanded causing the pipe to rupture.

Fortunately for us, no students were in the building and no one was injured. However, many of our student’s personal belongings were damaged and we were forced to relocate several roommate groups. We were also lucky to have spaces available on campus in which we could move students for the time being. Between me and the Assistant Vice President for Residence Life, we were able to reach out to the students who were impacted by the damage and get them in the building to remove their items. Some of the students were upset, but most of them were understanding of the situation and were willing to work with us.

We also benefited from having a very competent facilities team and excellent contractors who effectively addressed the structural issues. Within days wet dry wall and insulation were extracted, the walls were treated for mold, and the carpets were dried. By the end of week-two painters were in the rooms. We are still in the midst of clean up to the hallways, but the majority of the rooms have been restored to their original state. Ultimately, we will be done with all major repairs by the end of February.

### **Lessons Learned**

I started off by discussing the fact that we are not always prepared for the elements that impact our residence halls. While we have the snow plows, salt trucks, and back-up generators, some of us are not accustomed to managing frozen pipes in our buildings. This experience has taught us quite a bit about planning for such issues.

### **Communication & Collaboration**

Communication was key for all parties involved. As a small institution, we had the ability to work closely with Facilities and the contractors in order to keep our residents up to speed on the status of their rooms. Daily walk-throughs with staff and weekly/individual communication with students ensured that all parties were content with the progress.

One challenge we faced was addressing social media. Some of our students were on campus during the incident and began posting videos and comments about the water damage before we were able to reach out to the affected rooms. Creating a Public Relations strategy to combat negative media or rumors is another consideration for those developing a strategic plan.

### **Break Closing Expectations**

Each institution’s expectations for hall closings differ; we do not require our students to remove their belongings, and I doubt we will move to that in the future. But we are looking to proactively change out Winter Closing procedures to make sure students’ belongings are not impacted because of a facilities related issue. These may include: revisiting the temperature requirement for rooms, creating greater accountability for Resident Assistants who inspect rooms during hall closings, and finding creative ways to ensure that residents are submitting facilities requests before they leave for extended breaks.

### **Risk Management Insurance**

Rarely do institutions cover the damages to student’s personal belongings. It is *highly* recommended that Housing & Residence Life provide families with information about supplemental or renters insurance during orientation. Housing Contracts should articulate coverage of personal items damaged, but rarely do students and/or their families read the fine print. Creating transparency around *risk management insurance* is important.

### **Amanda Merson**

*Resident Director, Stevenson University*



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## **Lessons Learned: Title IX Investigations**

TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972; 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 states that ‘No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.’

That is Title IX. There are more qualifications, amendments, subsections, and exceptions, but this is Title IX. Although this sentence, and Title IX itself, is often used as a rationale for action taken, or not taken by universities it

is important to recognize that the violation that institutions could find themselves responsible for can come from other entities. Directives from a White House Task Force, the Violence Against Women Act, the Campus SaVE Act, the Dear Colleague Letter, and so on and so forth are changing the way in which colleges and universities are addressing reports of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and all other violations and criminal acts based on sex and/or gender.

In response to our university being very aggressive in facilitating a top to bottom education and response plan, I have had the opportunity to work with some amazing people in developing our response protocol. From immediate safety to adjudication, we worked hard to come up with a plan that went beyond satisfying federal mandates. We wanted to be proactive and make a difference to all students.

Recently this meant participating in a training geared at addressing different ways in which we should be investigating all reported cases of sexual misconduct. I wanted to share some of the lessons learned with all that are interested in hopes that as further strategies arise, there can be open dialogue about how best to get to the truth.

**Lesson #1:** The goal is to find the truth. What factually happened? Be ok with different interpretations of the same event. Those adjudicating the case will review the interpretations and weigh all opinions appropriately. As we investigate, we must focus on the factual aspects of the event. Facts do include emotions and feelings of those involved, just not yours as an investigator.

**Lesson #2:** When interviewing the victim, build rapport and express empathy. Victims should never be treated as witnesses to their own crime. Ask what they remember and understand that the physiological impact that the trauma may have caused. They may remember things in pieces or snapshots and that is ok. Ask open ended questions such as "What are you able to remember about the experience" and "What was that like?" Always about what they were focused on and what they remember using each of their senses. A smell or a sound can be as powerful a trigger to the victim as any other interaction.

**Lesson #3:** No matter what question you ask, once you do just sit in silence and let the victim talk. It can be for a minute or an hour. Let them go in whatever direction they want to go. You can ask follow up questions later. Allow them to share their experience as they perceive it.

**Lesson #4:** When interviewing the alleged, remember that the investigation should not be an interrogation. As we investigate it is only human to become emotionally invested in the case and those students involved with it. That must be put aside. We should not act as though we need to prove that something did or did not happen. Do not take sides.

**Lesson #5:** Be aware of Russell Strand and his Three Personas theory. According to Russell Strand, retired criminal investigator and leader in the investigatory field as it relates to allegations of sexual misconduct, all people have three personas.

- Public Persona: Acting the way you want others to perceive you
- Uninhibited Persona: What you act like when friends and family are around. What they see in you
- Private Persona: The skeletons in your closet. This is where fantasies reside, where deeds people do or think about doing reside, but you don't want anybody to know.

**Lesson #5 (continued):** Try and connect to the individuals Private Persona. When speaking with the accused, you want them to disclose things to you that they wouldn't to their closest friend or family member.

**Lesson #6:** Understand that the accused may feel like a victim, so treat them like one. Not in the sense that you dismiss or approve of the events that took place, but respect their position no matter how inappropriate you feel it may be at the time.

**Lesson #7:** Approach the conversation with a sense of curiosity instead of seeming to be on a direct fact finding mission. Avoid Yes/No questions. Instead of asking "Was it consensual sex," ask "How it was like for you?" Be ok asking intimate questions. Things like "What was the most difficult part for you" or "Tell me more about that" are ways to engage the individual in the conversation. Acknowledge their pain. Ask about what they were thinking and feeling before, during, and after the event.

**Lesson #8:** Don't write anything down at first when you talk to individuals involved. By writing things down you are forced to not only take your eyes off the person, losing insight to their reactions to certain questions (see Lesson #9), but you also show them what details you are focusing on. Keep eye contact and let them take the conversation wherever they want it to go and then follow up with the note taking as you ask clarifying questions.

**Lesson #9:** Be aware of body language. Now let's be real. Although we have all seen TV shows that talk about micro-expressions and how that may give away whether or not something is truthful, the reality is that unless you are a specially trained agent with the FBI or some other law enforcement agency we will not be able to pick up on any of these tells. What we can do is recognize if the person is tense, hesitant, anxious, calm, etc. We can see if they are looking at the door for a way out or if they are engaged in the conversation. If you find a trigger, use it. Press when you need to and back off when you need to.

**Lesson #10:** An interview does not conclude an investigation. Utilize all of the resources available to you outside of the interview. Go and visit the scene. If possible at the same day and time of the event. You may notice things that happen regularly at that day and time that could offer up more insight into possible witnesses and/or what



happened. Talk to people (be cognoscente of the perceived impact this may have on both parties because you do not want to make the event public). Check out social media sites. Look at posted events and see who replied saying they were attending. The point being that there is information everywhere and you should never limit your information gathering to the interviews.

The information provided within this article is not the “be all end all” as it relates to what you and your university should be doing. No matter your current level of expertise on involvement in Title IX investigations please take time to find out what your institutional preferences are in regards to the ways you might interact with victims, the alleged, witnesses, friends, families, etc. Your impact, no matter how minor, may be incredibly meaningful to those you speak with.

Adapted for this newsletter by Scott Schuhert from his blog HigherEdScott.wordpress.com. Scott is the current Associate Director of Residential Life where he oversees all operational, student conduct, and crisis management processes for the Binghamton University Department of Residential Life.

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***Want to write an article?***

Have a topic you want to know more about?  
Have information or an event to share?

Just follow the link below!

<http://tinyurl.com/kcou3kv>

The next newsletter is coming in September! **Submit an article by January 26th!**

## Commission Sponsored Programs

The Commission for Housing & Residential Life is sponsoring a number of program sessions for the 2015 ACPA Convention. Here is a list of sponsored program sessions this year. We hope to see you there!

- *"The View from the Director's Chair in Residential Life":* Troy L. Seppelt, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
- *A Collaborative Approach to Addressing Inclusive Language on Campus:* Paige Smith, University of Maryland
- *Best Practices Implementing the Campus sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act:* Aaron J. Hart, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- *Living-Assessing-Learning: Recreating the National Study of Living Learning Programs (NSLLP):* Matthew J. Mayhew, New York University
- *Reinventing Roles: Shaping the Story of a Department Re-Organization:* Amanda R. Knerr, Indiana State University
- *The Status of Gender-Neutral Housing: Findings from a National Study:* Deborah J. Taub, University North Carolina, Greenboro



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