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Submissions for the next *Life-Line* are due **Friday, November 13, 2009** to HRLLifeLine@gmail.com

Questions?
Contact Editor-in-Chief Gudrun Haider at gudrun.haider@unf.edu

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Hi everyone. Don’t look now, but the end of the summer is upon us. If your summer was anything like mine, then it still feels like it should be June, but it is already August. Now it is time for our student staff members to return to campus, followed closely by the residents. I am sure you are all putting the final polishing touches on staff training while preparing to re-open your halls for the fall semester. As for me, I just returned from Louisville, Kentucky where I attended ACPA’s Summer Leadership Meeting. It is a wonderful city and will serve as a wonderful host site for ACPA’s convention in 2012. Here is a brief glimpse of some of the things that I learned at the meeting that will impact the upcoming year.

The ACPA 2010 convention team presented us with updates about what we can expect in Boston next year. There will be the option of purchasing a one day pass for the convention for the first time ever. If you are in the Boston area and can’t make it for the entire convention, you will be able to buy a pass for a single day, so you can still take part in the convention even if you can’t attend everything.

There is also exciting news from our President, Tom Jackson. ACPA and NASPA have started looking into the idea of unification of the two organizations. The President’s of both organizations have released a joint letter to discuss the idea of unifying ACPA and NASPA. The joint letter can be found through a link on the ACPA homepage.

All in all, the leadership weekend was very informative and motivating. It helped me to remember that what we do as a Commission is extremely important to both the Association as a whole and also to our constituents working throughout housing and residential life. I appreciate all the work that you put into your schools and your staff members each and every day and want to applaud you on your efforts. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or thoughts at adrian_gage@yahoo.com. Enjoy the rest of your summer and the preparations for a wonderful new academic year.

Sincerely,

Adrian Gage

*Adrian Gage
Chair, Commission for Housing and Residential Life
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Commission for Housing and Residential Life — Educational Priorities:

Newsletter articles, sponsored programs, and other initiatives of the Commission address topics that fall within our educational priorities. After asking for Commission member’s input, the Directorate Body chose the educational priorities at our Commission Meeting at the Annual ACPA Convention.

The educational priorities for this year are: Mental Health Issues in Residence Halls, Student Learning in Residence Halls, and Professional Development for Residence Life Staff

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE LIFE-LINE - WE HAVE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

We are always looking for help with our quarterly newsletter, the *Life-Line*. Whether you are a graduate student who just wrote a paper for one of your classes, a new professional who is looking for that first opportunity to get published, or a seasoned professional who would like to share your expertise - we want YOUR submission.

There are many different types of submissions you could send our way:

- Scholarly articles addressing one of our three focus areas for this year: **mental health issues in residence halls, student learning in residence halls, or professional development for residence life**

staff. Our goal is to have at least one article addressing each topic for each issue.

- Interviews with “experts” in our profession relating to our focus areas.
- Pictures from residence hall programs.
- Programming resources that you have utilized successfully. (Just share some information about the resource and how you utilized it).
- Respond to our “Question” (See page 13 for our next question.)
- Submit a question for our “Think About It... Talk About It...” section.

All submissions should be sent to HRLLifeLine@gmail.com. If you have questions about what to submit or would like one of our *Life-Line* staff members to work with you on your submission, please contact us at HRLLifeLine@gmail.com or call Gudrun, Editor-in-Chief, at (904)620-4672. Please also let us know if you have feedback about the *Life-Line*. We look forward to working with you!

Upcoming LifeLine Deadlines

- November 13, 2009 for December edition
- February 12, 2010 for March edition

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR RESIDENCE LIFE STAFF

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

By Romando A. Nash, J.D., Director of Housing and Residence Life, Seattle University

Professional Development: how do I love thee; let me count the ways. Nothing is as important to our professional careers as the opportunity for us to engage in professional development opportunities. The importance of professional development can be found in ACPA's Statement of Ethical Principles and Standards. Yet the question becomes *in these tough economic times where hiring freezes, budget cuts, travel freezes, and staff reduction has become the norm, how do you find the opportunity to continue your growth in the professional development arena?* In an effort to find some answers for you I asked colleagues from across the nation to submit to me five inexpensive ways to continue professional development opportunities in these tough economic times. The following list is a compilation of the responses that I received. These responses come from entry-level, mid-level, and CHO housing professionals and offer something for everyone. By no means is this list exhaustive, but hopefully it will provide you with some ideas that you haven't thought about and keep you on track to continue your professional development.

Inexpensive Professional Development Opportunities:

Connect with professionals at nearby schools either through drive-in conferences or by emailing someone there. Most professionals love to share what they are doing and would be happy to sit and chat. This also will grow your professional network outside your institution.

Schedule regular phone dates with colleagues you've met at conferences or old supervisors to discuss predetermined themes/trends.

Organize campus site visits. Set up afternoons to visit other local campuses to meet with colleagues and understand their philosophy and best practices.

Develop a mentorship program. Identify a group of SSAO's that would like to participate in a mentorship program with mid-level and entry level professionals. It would be structured as a once a month lunch appointment between the SSAO (mentor) and mid or entry level staff member (mentee). Every quarter/semester an SSAO could switch to a new mentee.

Develop a professional development conference series. Within a department or division, members will submit conference proposals using standards similar to ACPA. Each proposal that is accepted will be designated a month out of the academic calendar year as a presentation date. These sessions should be treated like an actual conference

session (quality, dress attire, etc.) and they could be exclusive to the department or division or open to any affiliate.

Create an article/book group. Pick articles, literature or books pertaining to higher education, diversity, student development, etc and have focused conversation around it each quarter.

Take the lead on a project in your department. This will build your confidence, prove your ability to do your job well, and provide you with the opportunity to build your resume. As you look forward, having something that you created for your institution/department will help you sell your skills.

Schedule regular lunches with colleagues across your division and your college/University.

Develop a job shadowing program with other departments across campus.

Attend University lectures/readings. Take advantage of what is going on at your campus. Invite some of your student staff members to join you and use it as an opportunity to have a dialogue with them.

Participate in professional committees. Join a regional, national, or international committee. Often times volunteering involves phone calls, electronic communication, and working in your own office at your desk.

Attend a community outreach/town hall meeting. Spend some time learning the community issues that affect your area of employment.

Use your College or Universities tuition benefit. Take or audit that class that you have been eyeing for a while now.

Sign up for a Webinar. Webinars are great opportunities to provide reasonably low-cost professional development for a group of people.

Keep in touch with your grad school friends! They are going through a lot of the same things you are and can be great resources for ideas.

Ultimately, your professional development is your responsibility. Despite the country being in an economic downturn, your pursuit of these opportunities should not diminish. I encourage you to take advantage of the resources that you have on your campus and in your surrounding community to make sure that you are continuing to develop not only yourself, but our profession as a whole.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN RESIDENCE LIFE

GRIEF AND LOSS *Information compiled by Jason A. Parcover, Ph.D., & Thomas J. Fillion, Ph.D.*

Most of us at some point will encounter a student facing the death or serious illness of a loved one. In fact, university faculty and administrators vastly underestimate the prevalence of these occurrences (Balk, 2001), often leaving students feeling invisible to their institutions. One important goal in working with these students is to help them feel connected rather than invisible and to experience some normalcy in dealing with their difficult situation. University and college personnel should aim to be intentionally supportive without being hovering. Here is some information that you might find helpful in your work:

Feelings of loss are very personal. People commonly associate certain losses with strong feelings of grief. These can include:

- Death of a parent, sibling, or other close relative
- Death of a friend
- Death of a partner
- Serious illness in a loved one
- Relationship breakup
- Loss of a close friendship

Subtle or less obvious losses can also cause strong feelings of grief, even though those around a student may not know the extent of their feelings.

Some examples include:

- Loss of health through illness
- Death of a pet
- Move to a new home
- Loss of a physical ability
- Leaving home
- Loss of mental ability
- Change of job
- Graduation from school
- Loss of financial security

SUDDEN VS. PREDICTABLE LOSS

Sudden or shocking losses--due to events like crimes, accidents, or suicide--can be traumatic. There is no way to prepare. They can challenge your sense of security and confidence in the predictability of life. You may experience symptoms such as sleep disturbance, nightmares, distressing thoughts, social isolation, or severe anxiety. Predictable losses--like those due to terminal illness--sometimes allow more time to prepare for the loss. However, they create two layers of grief: the grief related to the anticipation of the loss and the grief related to the final loss.

HOW LONG DOES GRIEF LAST?

The length of the grief process is different for everyone. There is no predictable schedule for grief. Although it can be quite painful at times, the grief process cannot be rushed. It is important to be patient with yourself as you experience the feelings and your unique reactions to the loss. With time and support, things generally do get better. However, it is normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss. Taking care of yourself, seeking support, and acknowledging your feelings during these times are ways that can help you cope.

NORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS

When experiencing grief, it is common to feel...

- Frustrated or misunderstood
- Irritable or angry (at the deceased, oneself, others, higher powers)
- Guilty
- Homesick
- Isolated --or, that you need more time alone
- Anxious, stressed, unable to concentrate
- Ambivalent
- Numb or without feelings

GRIEF AS A PROCESS OF HEALING

Several authors have described typical stages or needs that the grieving person experiences. For example, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross suggested that grief involves stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Alan Wolfelt described "mourning needs," which include acknowledging the reality of the death, embracing the pain of the loss, remembering the person who died, developing a new self-identity, searching for meaning, and receiving ongoing support from others.

It is important to note that the grief process is not linear, but is more often experienced in cycles. Grief is sometimes compared to climbing a spiral staircase where things can look and feel like you are just going in circles, yet you are actually making progress. Patience with the process and allowing feelings to come without judgment can help. If you feel stuck in your grief, talking to a counselor or a supportive person may help you move forward in the

Jason A. Parcover, Ph.D., Associate Director for Research, Technology, and Outreach joined the Loyola University Maryland Counseling Center staff in August, 1999. He completed his doctorate in Counseling Psychology at Southern Illinois University. Jason maintains interests in areas of men's issues and women's issues, and has specialized training and experience working with self-esteem and relationship issues, therapy groups, outreach, supervision, and teaching.

Thomas J. Fillion, Ph.D., Senior Psychologist is a part-time staff member in the Loyola University Maryland Counseling Center. He was educated at Johns Hopkins and Yale, and served on staff at Sheppard Pratt for seven years before joining Loyola in 1996. He has special expertise working with students experiencing anxiety, depression, and with issues of self-esteem and relationships.

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GRIEF AND LOSS

healing process.

CULTURE, RITUALS, AND CEREMONIES

Your cultural background can affect how you understand and approach the grief process. Some cultures anticipate a "time to grieve" and have developed rituals to help people through the grief process. Support from others can be a reminder that grief is a universal experience and that you are not alone. After a significant loss, some cultures have mourning rituals to mark the passage of time and help individuals reconnect with their ordinary lives.

A mourning ritual can occur during a meaningful time, like an anniversary, wake, or holiday, or at a distinct location like a church, synagogue, or home. In North American cultures, for example, there are the Catholic anniversary mass, the reciting of Kaddish, and El Día de los Muertos. Many ceremonies have spontaneously grown up around the Vietnam War Memorial, and a special mourning project, the AIDS Quilt, travels throughout the nation to enable mourners to participate in this expression of grief. Grief rituals and ceremonies acknowledge the pain of loss while also offering social support and a reaffirmation of life.

You may not be conscious of how your own cultural background affects your grief process. Talking with family, friends, or clergy is one way to strengthen your awareness of possible cultural influences in your life. Friends and family may be able to help you generate ideas to create your own rituals. Some have found solace in creating their own rituals, such as a ceremony with friends, or writing a letter to the deceased.

HOW CAN YOU COPE WITH GRIEF?

- Talk to family or friends
- Seek counseling
- Read poetry or books
- Engage in social activities
- Write in a journal
- Eat good foods
- Exercise
- Take time to relax
- Seek spiritual support
- Listen to music
- Join a support group
- Let yourself feel grief
- Be patient with yourself

Each one of us has an individual style of coping with painful times. The list above may help you generate ideas about how to manage your feelings of grief. You may want to experiment with these ideas or create a list of

your own. Talking to friends who have dealt with loss in the past can help you generate new ways of coping. Only you know what coping skills will fit best with your personality and lifestyle.

One way to examine your own style of coping is to recall the ways you've dealt with painful times in the past. It's important to note that some ways of coping with grief are helpful, like talking to others, writing in a journal, and so forth. Others may be hurtful or destructive to the healing process, like substance abuse or isolation. Healthy coping skills are important in resolving a loss. They cannot take away your feelings of loss. They can, however, help you move forward in the healing process.

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT OTHERS WHO ARE GRIEVING?

- Be a good listener
- Ask about their feelings
- Just sit with them
- Share your feelings
- Ask about their loss
- Remember the loss
- Make telephone calls
- Acknowledge the pain
- Let them feel sad
- Be available when you can
- Do not minimize grief
- Talk about your own losses

People who are grieving often feel isolated or lonely in their grief. Soon after the loss, social activities and support from others may decrease. As the shock of the loss fades, there is a tendency on the part of the griever to feel more pain and sadness. Well-meaning friends may avoid discussing the subject due to their own discomfort with grief or their fear of "making the person feel bad." They may "not know what to say."

People who are grieving are likely to fluctuate between wanting some time to themselves and wanting closeness with others. They may want someone to talk to about their feelings. Showing concern and thoughtfulness about a friend shows that you care. It's better to feel nervous and awkward sitting with a grieving friend than to not sit there at all.

Whenever you meet or work with a student who is dealing with the illness of a loved one or who has experienced a recent loss, consider helping them access other support systems on campus, including the counseling center, spiritual advisors, or the dean of students.

RESIDENTIAL CURRICULUM INSTITUTE



Purposeful Student Learning In A Time Of Accountability

ACPA | RESIDENTIAL
Curriculum
INSTITUTE

October 1–3, 2009 | University of New Hampshire | Durham, New Hampshire, USA

Overview of the Institute

The third annual Residential Curriculum Institute will challenge you to rethink the practices and grounding philosophies of your residential program. You will have the opportunity to view an alternative to traditional programming models, work toward the development of a student-learning centered department missions, practice developing assessable learning outcomes, and examine the impact this shift in thinking and practice has on you, your department, and students. Ultimately, you will learn to uncover the opportunities to deliver educational messages in every student interaction. These interactions include student check-in, building meetings, RA-student one-on-ones, and survey questions.

We have gathered a group of excellent, insightful speakers to share their wisdom and expertise in practical applications. Institutions with residential curricula will also illustrate what has and has not worked on their campuses.

Residence halls constitute one of the most unconsidered and untapped educational venues on college

and university campuses. Hundreds of thousands of undergraduate students live in residence hall environments each year. The inherent physical design of these environments and the shared experience of a concentrated undergraduate population affords each student the access to an unprecedented learning experience, one that will likely never occur again. As student affairs professionals overseeing the direction of residence hall education, we have a responsibility to move beyond simply providing opportunities for learning towards an approach that is intentionally designed for our specific student populations.

Plenary Speakers:

George D. Kuh, Susan Komives, & Victor Arcelus

Additional Information can be found at:

<http://www.myacpa.org/pd/rci>

This event is sponsored by ACPA and its Commissions for Housing and Residential Life and Assessment and Evaluation. It is co-hosted by the University of New Hampshire and Dartmouth College, with support from American Campus Communities

STUDENT LEARNING IN RESIDENCE HALLS

EDUCATING RAS ON HOW TO FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

By Gudrun Haider, Area Coordinator, University of North Florida

I have recently started working as an Area Coordinator at the University of North Florida. I manage a building of 500 residents and supervise 10 Resident Assistants. One of my goals for the year is to help my Resident Assistants become more aware of their role as an educator and focus on student learning as the main purpose of their position. I'd like to take you along on this journey: in each issue of the *LifeLine*, I will share with you what initiatives I've been working on, how my staff is responding to this new way of looking at their position, and how these changes are affecting my residential community.

The University of North Florida has utilized a traditional programming model, called the DASH model. Resident Assistants have to program in four categories (DASH = Diversity, Academics, Service, Health & Safety) as well as do two additional programs in one of the elective categories (ranging from social to a university event to environmental, etc.). In conversations with my staff, I soon realized that, while the intent is to have some educational components to programming, this had never been their main focus. Some of my RAs tried to convince me that a finals study break is a great academic program. When asking what they wanted to do for a program, I would get answers such as, "Well, I was thinking about getting ice cream"; or "I've been debating between getting pizza rolls or chips and other snacks."

I also soon began to sense that many RAs think their main role is to be policy enforcers. Not surprisingly, in conversations with students, I learned that students also thought of RAs policy enforcers. An RA candidate told me that she would be a great RA because she worked as a desk assistant and was therefore aware of all the policies already and wouldn't have a problem enforcing those. When I asked her about what relationships she wants to have with her students, she talked about wanting them to respect her and abide by the policies. Now many colleagues who have worked with me over the past few years will tell you that I take policy enforcement pretty seriously and am probably one of the "stricter" professional staff members—but while I believe in abiding by laws and policies, I don't see policy enforcement as our main purpose. For me, we are first and foremost educators.

I really want to change this culture. I want my staff to focus on the relationships they're building with their residents. I want them to think about what residents will gain from living in our residential community. I want them to think of themselves as educators.

On one of the first training days, I asked my staff to come up with a list of roles that RAs play. Not surprisingly, policy enforcer was one of the first ones mentioned; I had to add educator myself. Next, I asked my staff to rank these roles based on importance. A heated debate started; many RAs putting policy enforcer first with a few trying to focus on other aspects. Educator was not one of their top choices. After allowing them to discuss the ranking for a little while, I stepped in and shared how I would rank the different roles and why. I challenged the staff to think about what the negative consequences could be if we saw policy enforcer as our most important role and students perceived us as being mostly policy enforcers. My arguments seemed to resonate with at least a few of the RAs and one of the returners talked to me later about how she really wanted to rethink her role as an RA. So far so good.

One of my colleagues and I brought up the idea of RAs having one-on-one conversations with residents. The other professional staff members loved the idea. We, therefore, introduced the concept to RAs during training. Having been told that RAs here truly value the one-on-one meetings they have with their supervisors and use them to not just talk about their job but also personal issues, we started the training session by asking staff to reflect on a meaningful one-on-one conversation they had been a part of. Then, we explained how one-on-one's with residents would work—asking them to have just one conversation with each resident a semester (RAs have about 50 residents here) and completing a short 3-question evaluation form after each meeting.

We had separated new staff and returners for this training session; expecting some backlash from returning RAs. That did not come. I was very excited to have one of my returners say that she had not been the best RA over the past year and that she thought these one-on-ones would really challenge her to be a much better RA. Later, we found out that some returning RAs were not thrilled about having to do one-on-one's but didn't feel like they'd be able to change our mind, so they chose just not to say anything.

We had not anticipated too much resistance from new staff members—after all they didn't know any better. Oh, how wrong we were! New staff got stuck on the idea that having to complete evaluation forms and writing on those what students had said during these conversations was an invasion of privacy. We tried to explain that we

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR RESIDENCE LIFE STAFF AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN RESIDENCE LIFE

SUPERVISING STUDENT STAFF WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

By Kelli M. Raker, Resident Director, Salem State College

The rates of Asperger's Syndrome (AS) among college students are increasing every year, considering that AS was coded into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1994 (Wolf, Thierfeld Brown, & Juluiela Bork, 2009). On my own campus, the number of students with AS assisted through Disability Services has gone up from 1% of the students served to 3% in just one year. This summer, I had the unique experience of supervising a Summer Conference Assistant with Asperger's Syndrome (AS), who for the purposes of this article I will call "Brad."

Though I am a new professional (2 years full time, post-master's), working with students with AS is not a completely new experience for me. I have seen a wide range of the symptoms of AS, most often including the typical social disability regarding awareness and core skills, coupled with behavioral problems, language disability, motor clumsiness, psychiatric symptoms such as depression, or sensory dysfunction (Wolf et al., 2009). As Housing and Residence Life professionals, we are more likely to see the impact of social obstacles when students with AS live in our halls, such as being able to evacuate effectively during a fire alarm or resolving conflicts with roommates (Wolf et al., 2009). As every person is different, it is critical to have a good relationship with the student and with your campus's Disability Services office in order to best serve each student.

Supervising a staff member with AS seems to be uncommon for Housing and Residence Life professionals, but may become more common as more individuals diagnosed with AS attend

college. Much of the literature on Asperger's Syndrome in higher education is related to the accommodations that faculty members or Disability Services offices may offer (Smith, 2007). I found little information about how student affairs professionals can work with students staff members with Asperger's – which is perhaps where it is most needed to help with the social disability. Students with AS are not encouraged to hold positions like the Summer Conference Assistant on my campus due to the limitations of providing customer service (Wolf et al., 2009). In fact, in Wolf, Theirfeld Brown and Kukiela Bork's book, *Residence Life* is not on a list of "on campus jobs" that are evaluated and recommended for students with AS (2009). The nature of our conference services and staffing two 24-hour desks with only 15 staff members means that we change the schedule every week. This environment was not ideal for Brad, since "difficulties with social interaction, communication, narrow interests and repetitive routines are representative of AS (Lord, 2000). For those working with AS students this means that caution must be exercised in adjusting the student's schedules and appointments" (Smith, 2007, p. 2). I found that Brad struggled less with the changing schedule and more with not knowing the tools to keep as consistent a schedule as possible each week, such as requesting the same shifts regularly and asking the other staff members to keep more consistent hours.

I have grown significantly by supervising a student staff member with AS and hopefully become a better supervisor to all my staff. Due to Brad's

social struggles, I tuned in to staff dynamics in new ways. Hearing the struggles of other staff members, both students as well as professional staff, when working with Brad helped me gain an overall picture of his skills and behaviors quickly. As a result, I was able to have more direct, clear conversations with Brad. Additionally, he disclosed to me and other staff members that he had AS early in the summer, making it easier for me to do research and ask questions of our Disabilities Services office. His openness with me made it easier to refer him to Counseling and Health Services through the summer, whether it was due to a cold or depression, common among AS college students (Harpur, Lawlor, and Fitzgerald, 2004). Finally, I believe that I became more patient and creative in teaching information, especially about social situations. My definition of "normal" social behavior was expanded in a positive way to be more accepting all around.

One important way I worked with Brad was to consistently have a written agenda for our staff meeting, even when it was short, so that he could reference it at a later time. I also provided information as much in advance as possible (such as staff manuals or evaluation forms). Our summer staff training included a quiz and homework over their SCA manuals, which was an excellent way for me to see what questions all the staff members had. It may be necessary to repeat important information (Harpur et al., 2009). Finally, I spent time following up after weekly staff meetings with Brad to answer questions and address any problematic behavior. Supervising

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ACUHO-I BALTIMORE CONFERENCE REVIEW: COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS, AND THOSE THAT ARE SOON TO BE



By **Scott Francis**, *University of Florida*

This past June I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International conference in Baltimore, Maryland. I have sampled several of the conference options out there and available for housing professionals, and in recent years, have found ACUHO-I to be extremely useful and relevant to my role.

I jumped at the opportunity to attend since I just recently moved from the nearby Northern Virginia/Washington, DC area. The conference planners even incorporated a baseball game at Camden Yards for the Opening Reception. The Baltimore Orioles play their home games mere footsteps from where the conference hotel was located.

This particular year, the ACUHO-I conference had a particularly profound effect on my professional experience, and I'm pleased that the *Lifeline* asked me to share some of my ACUHO-I highlights with you.

I'll start with a session I attended that changed the way I view professional conferences, my attendance at them, and how I present information to other housing professionals. I attended the session called, "Practices for Improving Learning During Conference presentations" presented by **Pam Schreiber**, Director of Housing at the University of Washington. While I knew Pam through shared colleagues and our connection at my current institution, where she used to work, I had never spent any significant time with her. What I took away from Pam's session was changing my mindset and presenting model when working with adult learners and that often, at conferences, the knowledge in the room is just as useful as the presenter. So many schools are doing different things that we can learn from that it makes sense to share during sessions. I also took away how important relationships and meeting up with colleagues, friends, and mentors, and those we don't know YET. Technology is in such a place now that there's no need to fly to Baltimore to have someone stand in front of the room and tell you about their topic. It's the sharing in the room, in the halls, at dinner, socials, etc... that is so important to us. This was one of the most impactful sessions I've been to.

At that session, I met **Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus**, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the College Student Personnel Admin. Master's degree program at Illinois

State University. Dr. McCluskey-Titus won ACUHO-I's Research and Publication Award at the conference and is extremely accomplished. While I was apprehensive to say much more to her than, "Hello" and "Congratulations," I soon found her to be extremely personable and easy to talk to. I should mention that I believe the first thing she ever said to me was (paraphrase), "Ugh, oh goodness, you're a Gator." Once we got past that, we chatted and found out that we both have roots at Western Illinois University and in the state of Florida (obviously her brand of Florida school was different than mine). The interactions I had with Dr. McCluskey-Titus were great and I appreciated the opportunity to talk shop and "regular things" with such an accomplished professional.



Going into my conference experience, I developed a plan for some of the topics and subjects that I was looking to obtain more information and made decisions on which sessions I would attend based on my plan. Over the course of a day and a half, I found myself in the same session as **Pam Peter**, Assistant Director of Housing at Syracuse University. I did not know Pam prior to the conference, but recognized her name. We had a conversation about being in so many similar sessions and what each of us were "looking for" from the conference. I found it interesting, if not reassuring, that a program that I hold in such high regard for many of the things their Residence Life program is doing, has staff that are interested in some of the same topics and knowledge that we are (I am). It was great to meet Pam, and I look forward to keeping in touch and sharing ideas and information as the year progresses.

The last two major highlights of my conference involved catching up with old friends and colleagues. I was able to spend time with **Christina George**, Assistant Director at George Mason University, who I once supervised and got to share updates on our lives and how things were going

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RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESLIFE

Submitted by Amy Franklin-Craft

In a few months, a request will be sent from the Commission to its membership requesting nominations for a number of commission-sponsored awards. The content of this article is designed to assist you in writing a successful nomination worthy of recognition. It is important to note that the tips and examples were adapted from the following web link: http://fwa.byu.edu/nomination_letters.doc. There are a number of resources available on the web!

Nominations will be solicited in mid-January, and winners will be announced at the annual conference in March.

How to Write a Strong Nomination Letter

1. Identify the person you want to nominate, and start the process months ahead of time.
2. Read and make sure you are clear about the criteria for judging who receives the award. Include all of the information requested by the awards committee.
3. Get a copy of the nominee's resume, and identify ways in which she meets the criteria.
4. If possible, involve the person you are nominating so that you can get accurate and detailed information about things that *are* and are *not* on the resume.
5. Try to identify something that you can use as a theme in the letter, or write a kind of "thesis statement" that sums up the person's qualifications at the beginning.
6. Organize the letter effectively, using specific details—numbers, facts, examples, anecdotes—to illustrate your generalizations. Examples have been provided for your review.
7. If possible, show early drafts of the letter to the nominee and other trusted readers to get feedback on how to improve it.
8. Solicit letters of support from others whose reputations will help the nominee be considered favorably. Supply helpful information to the writers of supporting letters.
9. Have someone check the final draft for typos and other mistakes before you submit it for review.
10. If at first you don't succeed, revise the letter as needed and nominate the person (or program) again at the next opportunity.

Writing a Strong Nomination: Examples for Your Review

Writing a strong nomination letter requires that you are specific in your comments with regard to the credentials of the individual or the outcomes of the program you are nominating. All too often, we assume that general statements about the individual or the program suffice. Keep in mind that you are putting the nominee/nominated program into a competition of sorts with others that have been nominated. Your role is to help the person or the program stand out in the field. Specificity within your nomination letter can occur in one of three ways: thematic specificity, qualitative specificity, or quantitative specificity. Below are examples to guide you as you begin to write your letter(s)!

Thematic Specificity:

1. _____'s **contributions** to student development/student affairs could well be summed up as **building bridges**. In ten years as a full-time professional practitioner, she has worked on bridges between academic and student affairs units (between student affairs departments, and/or between student affairs professionals).
2. _____ has worked in residence life at a variety of institutions for five years. She exhibits the kind of **work ethic** and professionalism that one wishes were characteristic of all full-time student affairs practitioners. To find such constant striving to improve in a practitioner—when there are virtually no extrinsic motivations or rewards for doing so—is truly

admirable. I believe the time has arrived to formally acknowledge _____'s significant contributions to student affairs.

Qualitative specificity (using anecdotes):

When _____ became _____, xi's focus changed from smaller, departmental concerns to larger, university issues. Xi set up an interdepartmental liaison structure, which enabled the department to develop relationships with various office representatives. Xi was always very enthusiastic about tackling university issues including retention and.... To cite a specific example, I attended a divisional symposium coordinated by _____ in September. Xi arranged for participants to visit every office that impacted students at risk to learn more about how each endeavored to address student retention. Xi kept us all together and guided the discussions we had with each office representative. The visits were a great success because we were able to educate the one another and create connections to systematically address a significant campus issue.

Quantitative Specificity (use of numbers):

The best reflection of X's skills lies in the recruitment of young student affairs professionals from the undergraduate ranks under ___X's leadership. During the last four years, 30% of our undergraduates have gone on to pursue careers in student affairs. Much of this is due to the extensive time and preparation X puts into the learning experiences and mentoring of Resident Assistants.

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ACPA 2010 • BOSTON • MARCH 20-24, 2010



ACPA BOSTON 2010 ANNUAL CONVENTION
INNOVATIVE IDEAS • REVOLUTIONARY RESULTS

For years, the ACPA Convention has served as the primary means for association members' professional and personal learning and growth. With unparalleled opportunities to actively engage, 2010 celebrates the opportunity to build on our present core competencies while boldly focusing on emerging trends and critical issues of the next decade.

Innovative Ideas - inspires and empowers us to imagine and to act as agents of change

Revolutionary Results - commits and challenges us to demonstrate effectiveness in support of teaching and learning

Innovative Ideas • Revolutionary Results starts now! Join the CHRL on this journey.

Go to <http://convention.myacpa.org/boston10> for more information about the convention.

What's Brewing in Boston?

Boston, a city known for its role in American Revolutionary history, is also a recognized leader in progress. Boston is America's college town, with more than 250,000 students at 50 institutions of higher education.



SUBMIT YOUR PROGRAM PROPOSAL - DUE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009 **Have Your ACPA Program Sponsored By The Commission for Housing and Residential Life!**

As the summer begins and we all take time to reflect on the events of the year and the opportunities ahead, please take time to reflect on how these events can be shared to help shape the development of others in the field. Is there something that others would benefit by knowing from you? Without question! Now is the time to start thinking about submitting a proposal for housing/residence life related programs for the 2010 ACPA Convention "Innovative Ideas, Revolutionary Results" March 20 - 24, 2010, in Boston. Proposals are due September 11, 2009

Information on program proposals is available on the ACPA website. Submissions can be made at <http://cdms.myacpa.org/?emc=lm&m=70947&l=5&v=567569> While you can submit any program for general conference presentation, consider applying for sponsorship from the Commission for Housing and Residential Life. The Commission will be sponsoring five programs and one roundtable. Having a program sponsored by the commission gives you the opportunity to target your presentation to fellow housing and residence life professionals and gives you additional recognition in the convention book and at the convention. To have your program considered for sponsorship by the commission, you will simply need to check the box on the program submission form, and the commission will review your program. If your program is not selected for sponsorship by the commission, it will go into consideration for a general convention program. The Commission is particularly interested in programs around three major areas of focus for our work: **Student Learning, Mental Health Considerations for Students, Professional Development**

For questions about submitting a proposal for sponsorship by the ACPA Commission for Housing and Residential Life at ACPA, please feel free to contact **Greg Thompson** at gregory-r-thompson@uiowa.edu or at (319) 335-3700.

We look forward to seeing all of the exciting proposals!

PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

In each issue, we will have a section on programming resources that staff members at different institutions have utilized successfully.

If you have any resources that you would be willing to share, please e-mail HRLLifeLine@gmail.com. Please include the following: information about the resource, a brief description about how you have utilized it, and whether or not you'd be willing to share further information with staff members interested in this resource.

We really hope this section will be beneficial to all of you. If you have suggestions on how to make it better, e-mail HRLLifeLine@gmail.com.

DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES: CROSSING THE LINE & DISCUSSION ABOUT CULTURE

Submitted by **Gudrun Haider**, *University of North Florida*

Looking for a new diversity activity for a staff meeting or to utilize with a group residents?

Here are two of my favorites:

Crossing the Line

Crossing the Line can be a powerful, interactive activity that challenges participants to reflect on their own background and creates awareness about the diversity of a group. It can be a great starting point for conversations about diversity and building an inclusive community.

For a facilitation guide, go to <http://www.freechild.org/Firestarter/CrossingTheLine.htm>

Discussion about Culture

When facilitating diversity education workshops (for RAs or residents), I like to start at the very beginning — with a discussion about what culture is.

I usually show my students a few movie clips (anything ranging from Clueless to Bend It Like Beckham or Drum Line) and then talk about what cultures could be seen in these clips. I think it's important to have at least one clip demonstrating White culture. After watching the clips, I ask my students to come up with a definition for culture—and then compare that to the dictionary's definition.

For more info, feel free to contact me at gudrun.haider@unf.edu.

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY:



Submitted by **Gudrun Haider**, *University of North Florida*

Habitat for Humanity offers a program called "Collegiate Challenge," which allows students from youth groups, high schools and colleges to spend their school break working in partnership with Habitat for Humanity. Participants in these trips will get a chance to help building a Habitat house (no previous experience required) and work at a local ReStore.

Once you choose a location (from a list of affiliates that are interested in working with student groups— information about preferred group size and services offered available), the Habitat Affiliate will take care of setting up everything else (housing, the service activities, sometimes certain meals are also included). A challenge of working with Habitat can be that there is a \$15 registration fee plus an affiliate fee per person (this money goes directly to the Habitat Affiliate you're working with and will be utilized for building materials, etc.) - while the money is going to a good cause, if your students can't afford the cost, and you do not have a big budget for these trips, this may not be a good option for you.

If money is not a concern, I would recommend Habitat as it makes organizing an Alternative Spring Break Trip very easy. For more information, go to http://www.habitat.org/youthprograms/ages_14_25/default_collegiate_challenge.aspx

A few tips:

- Start planning early, especially as sites in popular locations go fast.
- Be flexible with where you want to go. Registered Habitat chapters get to choose first, but there's usually still a lot of good sites left.

I have organized two Habitat for Humanity Alternative Spring Break Trips and would be happy to share my experiences with you. For more information, contact me at gudrun.haider@unf.edu.

WORKING IN RESIDENCE LIFE

NACURH 2009 CONFERENCE

NACURH stands for National Association of College and University Residence Halls. Many of us working in Residence Life have accompanied delegations from our Residence Hall Associations, Inter-Residence Councils, or whatever else we may call our student governments to the annual NACURH Conference. In 2009, NACURH was held at the University of Arizona. For more information about NACURH, go to www.nacurh.org. All Pictures courtesy of NACURH: http://nacurh.org/NACURH_info/



THINK ABOUT IT... TALK ABOUT IT...

In each issue, we will introduce one or two questions or facts. We encourage you to discuss these questions or facts with your colleagues at your institution or to discuss them over our listserv.

Are Resident Assistants educators? And if they are, how are we preparing our staff to be educators?

Do you have a question/fact for our *Think About It... Talk About It..?* E-mail it to HRLLifeLine@gmail.com

Question for our next Life-Line:
(continued from the last issue)

“What has been the greatest lesson you have learned from working in Student Affairs?”

Submit your answer to HRLLifeLine@gmail.com by October 31, 2009. Please include your name and current institution. Your answer may be featured in our next Life-Line.

Supervising Student Staff with Asperger's Syndrome ... - continued from page 8

ing students with AS in their role as a student staff member in Residence Life may or may not be different from supervising students *without* AS on your campus. The most important suggestion I have for working with any student, especially those with Asperger's, is to meet regularly with the student as an opportunity to connect and build a relationship. The positive reinforcement I provided allowed us to talk through any concerns and for me to honestly say, "I know that you can do this" while teaching him the skills he needed.

Beyond individual meetings, it is crucial to be aware of the staff dynamics in any group! Individuals with AS may or may not require certain allowances when functioning in a group. For example, he or she may need to use a laptop or another sensory item during a staff meeting. When it comes to icebreakers and teambuilders, some individuals with AS may be less comfortable with games involving touching – or they may not be aware of the social boundaries needed to play some games, making them less successful. I found this summer that encouraging peer support and mentorship (Wolf et al., 2009) was critical for tasks which did not require my direct supervision. I spent as much time working with other staff members listening to their concerns with Brad's behavior as I did working with Brad himself. I suggested that he go to other students with specific questions and sometimes we developed "scripts" (Smith, 2007) or had him practice asking for help from these individuals, such as when he needed a shift covered. Like with any staff member with various strengths and weaknesses, there were tasks I felt less comfortable giving to him to do by himself. I instead focused on giving him the experiences he needed to grow while limiting the frustrations of other staff members working with him in pairs or small groups.

Finally, I held Brad accountable for completing his job tasks and for following policy to the same extent I would have any other student. Though I was sensitive to his stress or anxiety, especially when it came to evaluations and the possibility of receiving a raise, I recalled that "the presence of any disability does not excuse the student's behavior" (Wolf et al., 2009, p. 75). The standards for the Summer Conference Assistant position are the same for all students, so I spent extra time working with Brad to provide feedback regularly, discuss evaluations openly and honestly, and understanding that his perception of his work was different than my other students based on his view of social interactions.

I hope that by sharing some of my experiences, other Residence Life and Housing professionals can know of resources and suggestions for supervising a student staff member with Asperger's. As the number of students grows, it will be increasingly important for our professional and paraprofessional staff members to understand Asperger's Syndrome. Wolf et al.'s 2009 book includes an appendix of "Tips for Training Residence Assistants" which could be a strong starting point for any training, especially when joined by the knowledgeable staff in Disabilities Services.

References:

Harpur, J., Lawlor, M., and M. Fitzgerald (2004). *Succeeding in college with Asperger Syndrome: A student guide*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Smith, C. P. (2007). Support services for students with Asperger's Syndrome in higher education. *College Student Journal*, 41 (3).

Wolf, L., Theirfeld Brown, J. and Kukiela Bork, G. R. (2009). *Students with Asperger Syndrome: A guide for college personnel*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

ACUHO-I Baltimore Conference Review ... - continued from page 9

at work. I also took in an Orioles game one evening with **Ele Ford**, Hall Director at Texas Christian University, who was once a grad student at my campus. Ele and I caught up on how things were going in our respective worlds, talked baseball, and she introduced me to her colleagues at TCU. Overall, a great time and I got to meet a handful of new people at the ballpark.

The greatest thing that I took away from the conference was that the value in attending any conference is immersing yourself in it, being present, and putting yourself out there to meet new people. You'll be shocked at how open so many of the professionals

in our field are. While catching up with old friends is a fun and great experience, I will always make sure I make time to branch out and spend time with people I haven't spent much time with. Much like my experience in college, I learned so much outside of the presentation sessions to support what I learned in it.

I would summarize my ACUHO-I experience as fantastic. So much that I participated in the Committee meeting for the **STARS College*** next year. It was there that I met a young woman named **Katie**, who attended the STARS College and then the remainder of the ACUHO-I conference. She is a junior at the University of

Akron and enjoys her leadership position so much that she's considering housing as a professional. I spent a few minutes talking to her in the hall after the committee meeting about her interest, what she's doing on campus, and her future plans. It reminded me again about why we do what we do and the affect we all have on the students we meet. Thanks to the extra 5 minutes I spent with Katie, and the pockets of time I spent with others, I returned to my campus refreshed, re-energized, and ready to make an impact on my campus again.

*want to learn more about STARS College? Go to <http://www.acuho-i.org/Default.aspx?tabid=644>

Recognize Outstanding Contributions in ResLife ... - continued from page 10

Another example of numerical specificity:

To set X's achievements in context, I would first like to outline the remarkable range of professional presentations X has facilitated, National groups with which X has been affiliated and the number of refereed journal articles X has written. Since 2000, when X joined the department, X has presented at least one session at each NASPA and ACPA national conference. These have covered a wide range of topics ranging from intercultural competence, to the changing role of Resident Assistant, to sustainability in Residence Life and Housing. In addition, X is the Committee Chair of _____, and the past chair of _____.

Finally, X has authored or co-authored 12 articles. X's desire to diversify X's skill sets and become proficient in a number of student affairs vocational areas has no doubt led to X's recent promotion from Director of Housing and Residence Life to Dean of Students.

Remember, the Commission on Housing and Residence Life Award categories include:

- OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT STAFF MEMBER**
- OUTSTANDING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT STAFF MEMBER**
- OUTSTANDING NEW PROFESSIONAL IN RESIDENCE LIFE**
- OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL AWARD**

- 4-9 years**
- 10 or more years**

- EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE AWARD**
- EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY**
- OUTSTANDING INNOVATION IN HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE**

For complete descriptions of these awards, please refer to the Commission web-site link: <http://www.myacpa.org/comm/housing/awards.cfm>.

Good Luck to you and those individuals and or programs you nominate!

Educating RAs... - continued from page 7

only wanted to get a basic idea of what the conversation had been about (e.g. academics, relationship with roommates) and not any deep, dark secrets that residents may share and that these notes would be things that RAs would usually share in one-on-ones with their supervisor anyway. But no matter what we said, we didn't get very far. The reaction was pretty negative and left me a little disheartened.

I later followed up with each one of my staff members individually to get a sense of how they truly felt about one-on-ones. I didn't get too much information during these conversations; maybe my staff just realized that this was something I am very passionate about and truly believe in. One of my returners did repeat over and over again how concerned he is about not being able to meet with all residents; he kept saying that he doesn't think all residents will be interested in meeting with him, but I couldn't help but get the feeling that he just did not want to meet with all of them. I'm not so sure he really likes being an RA and working with people; he enjoys doing door dees and passive programming; he's not much into going out there and interacting with his residents.

We opened last weekend. The first few social programs happened this weekend—many focusing a lot more on food than what I'd like to see. I definitely think there's a need for a few more discussions at staff meeting about the purpose of programming and being educators. The concept of one-on-ones was introduced to residents at the first floor meetings—without much reaction. I guess we'll just see how it goes. *[To be continued in the next LifeLine.]*

SUDOKU

The objective is to fill the 9x9 grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

Did you know...

...that Sudoku is an incredibly good "exercise" for your mind? Challenging your mind to "learn new tricks" and keep on its toes can actually help prevent Alzheimer's disease and dementia as you age. It can also relieve stress and keep you mentally balanced and socially connected.

				9			7	5
8		2			7	9		
				1	2			
		7					9	
9		4				7		2
	1					6		
			4	3				
		9	7			5		4
6	4			5				