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Greetings Commission for Housing and Residential Life Members!
November 2013 Newsletter



 Commission for
Housing and Residence Life

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Say What You do and do What You Say

Since most Residence Life staff members are into the year's routine, and staff selection will be ramping up shortly, it seems like a perfect time to explore the RA position. After all, RAs are asked to perform many responsibilities: from administration, to safety and security, to education and paraprofessional advising, etc. It is important that they understand what they're being asked to do and trained appropriately how to do it. However, often prevailing university philosophies and role expectations for RAs are incongruent with departmental philosophies and role expectations. Further complicating the issue, departmentally espoused philosophies are not always congruent with what RAs expect of their role or experience while fulfilling their role. These discontinuities can be significant and frustrating for professionals, RAs, and students alike. Thus, I will use my "Welcome" to invite us all to consider the RAs' role and their lived experience. I will briefly discuss an article I recently read and highlight an interview I conducted with John Foubert, author of [How to Avoid the Biggest Mistakes made By College Resident Assistants](#). My hope is to cause you to think more deeply about the alignment between your goals, your roles, and your systems.

Do you ever feel like Gumby – stretched in 30 or so different directions, both personally and professionally? Or perhaps, on those rough days, you liken your emotions to Mount Vesuvius about to erupt? These metaphors, and others like them, create powerful images that enable others to gain a perspective to our experiences and emotions. Kathleen Kerr and Robert Longwell–Grice (2013), believing that most individuals approach newly secured jobs with an idea of what the responsibilities will be like, designed a study utilizing metaphors to understand Resident Assistant satisfaction and job success. Specifically, they used a qualitative research design to ascertain 1) what metaphors first year RAs would use to describe their roles; and 2) if metaphors selected by RAs prior to the beginning of their job would serve as a predictor of job success and satisfaction by year’s end. For the sake of brevity, I’ll omit a great deal of thoughtful insights discussed by Kerr and Longwell Grice and cut to the chase. Not surprisingly, the RAs whose metaphors were consistent from pre–employment to year–end were more satisfied and more successful in their roles. To me, this underscores the importance of congruency of message in departmental branding as well as in staff recruitment, selection, and training processes.

This past month, I had the good fortune of interviewing John Fourbert, author of [How to Avoid the Biggest Mistakes Made by College Resident Assistants](#) (please see article contained within this newsletter). This interview reminded me of the importance of Kerr and Longwell–Grice’s research. The book contains 48 letters (chapters) written from the perspective of an experienced RA to a new RA. It provides a mechanism to frame a conversation about the RA role, common missteps, and likely experiences. I encourage you to read both the Kerr and Longwell–Grice article as well as Fourbert’s book. As you begin to puzzle through recruitment and selection, consider the congruency of your program goals, your staff roles and the systems you have in place for developing and maintaining your staff team.

Have a wonderful November!

Sincerely,

Amy Franklin-Craft, Ph.D.

Chair, Commission for Housing and Residence Life

Resources:

John D. Foubert. *Lessons Learned: How to Avoid the Biggest Mistakes Made by College Resident Assistants* (2nd Ed). (Second ed). New York: Routledge, 2014.
Kerr, K. & Longwell–Grice, R. (2013). Counselor, teacher, role model cop: Understanding RA satisfaction through the use of metaphor. *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, 39 (2), 90–103.

An Interview with John Foubert

Amy Franklin-Craft

Being the Chair of the ACPA Commission for Housing and Residence Life affords numerous opportunities to meet amazing people who contribute to making our nation's residence life communities the vibrant educational environments that they are and continue to be. Recently I got the chance to meet up with Dr. John Foubert, an old-time res-lifer himself, and talk about his new book, *Lessons Learned: How to avoid the biggest mistakes made by college resident assistants* (2nd Edition).

Why did you choose to write this sort of book?

I wrote the first edition of *Lessons Learned* back in 2007. Lots of folks used it in their RA classes, in staff meetings, and for in-service training, so when Routledge (a division of Taylor and Francis) asked me to write a second edition, I jumped at the chance. I was thrilled to write the new edition because so many new issues have come up in residence life since the first edition was written! I decided to write this kind of book because I served as an RA myself and know what it is like to make mistakes during my first year on staff. I also know what it is like to teach an RA class and to supervise RAs. Often we see first-year staff make the same mistakes each year. A lot of these mistakes could be avoided if we have good conversations before they happen. So this book is an attempt to dialogue with RAs about the kind of mistakes that are common among new RAs and talk about how to avoid them in their first year.

What are you hoping folks will get out of it?

I hope that new RAs will learn from each of the 48 short chapters, written in the form of a letter from a more experienced RA to a new RA, about how to avoid a common mistake often made by a first year RA. One thing I'm excited about in this second edition is that I've added the framework of student development theory to the book as a lens, so the first chapter introduces Sanford's Theory, which is then woven throughout the book through questions at the end of each chapter about how to promote the development of residents. If people decide not to take a developmental approach, that is OK too, there is another list of questions at the end of each chapter that are more basic and practical. Each chapter also includes further resources on the Internet and general advice on the issue raised by the chapter.

Who is the book geared toward and how would you suggest the book be used?

The book is intended to be read by students who are serving on residence life staff. It is also a great book for graduate and professional staff who supervise others and are looking for excellent case studies to process in a training environment or staff meeting. Each chapter is self-contained – you don't have to read the book from start to finish. The topics vary widely and include programming, facilities issues, racism, Facebook issues, parents, alcohol, sharing prescription drugs, noise, Asperger's Syndrome, suicide, dating residents and other RAs, fire safety, and staff conflicts.

The ideal way for the book to be used is in an RA class, with students reading a few chapters

per week and then coming in to talk about the discussion questions that are listed in the book. You might also have students write reaction papers based on some of the discussion questions listed. Another way to use the book is to have RAs read a chapter before each staff meeting during the year and then come to the meeting with their ideas on how to handle the situation. On one of the campuses that used the book in their RA class, they gave an assignment to students to write their own chapter for the second edition of Lessons Learned. They sent them to me and I ended up using three of these in the book! I encourage people to send me their own ideas for new editions. I hope to write a third edition in about 5 years or so.

What were the biggest “ah ha” moments in researching/writing the book?

One of the fun things I got to do in writing the second edition is do a lot of research about Nevitt Sanford. Most people know Sanford for the two concepts of Challenge and Support. I’ve always known that there was way more to Sanford than these two concepts, but I had no idea how illustrious his career was and how much he contributed to so many areas of knowledge. Too many people in our field think of Sanford as simple. His writings are actually some of the most complex out there, and when you read them, you can see how his ideas formed the basis for many of the other theorists who followed him. Sanford published almost 200 articles and a dozen books. That is an amazing feat! Sanford was a man of great character. In 1950, he was one of the “fearsome five” faculty at Berkeley who refused to sign an oath declaring he was not a member of the communist party during the Red Scare. Though he had no known affiliation with the communist party, he resented being asked to sign such an oath because he had the ardent belief that we should protect diversity of opinion among faculty on college campuses. He was fired for his beliefs, left, ultimately returned to Berkeley after winning a lawsuit, and left again to work at Stanford. He was also an early champion of providing increased access to college for student of color. I talk about this in the book, he really was an amazing individual.

How do people get a copy of the book?

To order, people can go to the Taylor and Francis website, Amazon, or wherever good books are sold. I’m also happy to answer any questions they have if they call or email me at 405-338-8046, john.foubert@gmail.com.

<http://www.taylorandfrancis.com/books/details/9780415538046/>



The Power of Inspirational Quotes

Why are inspirational quotes so powerful? For one thing, they can express in words, what you feel in your heart. For another, sometimes it helps to know that you’re not alone, and others have been in the same shoes. They can keep you going when you’re down, or they can help you on your climb to the top. Sometimes you just need to hear the right words, said in a different way, to help you rise above the noise and take a balcony view. And sometimes, people just say

the thing that spark your heart, or puts your imagination in over-drive, or simply rekindles your possibilities. Here are some quotes from our commission friends to get you through your day:

- Leslie Byrd, Residence Life Coordinator, Kenai Peninsula College says "Res Life, It's not a job, it's a lifestyle."
- Erica Hedrick, Director of Residence Life, Endicott College loves the quote "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." – Margaret Mead
- Troy Seppelt, Director of Residence Life, Colorado Mesa University has a favorite quote in his office: "Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible." – Anonymous
- Laura Arroyo, Associate Director for Residential Education at Elon University writes, "If you look for the bad in mankind, expecting you will find it, you surely will." – Abraham Lincoln.
- Meredith Carpenter, Coordinator of Human Resources in Res Life, University of Maryland, connects with: "The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own." Benjamin Disraeli
- Marshall Greenleaf, Assistant Director of Residence Life, UMass Lowell connects with "You can design and create, and build the most wonderful place in the world. But it takes people to make the dream a reality." – Walt Disney
- Sally Bertolino, Associate Director of Residence Life, Merrimack College writes: "Be the change you wish to see in the world." by Ghandi



Promising Practices

What is new and exciting on your campus?



PROGRAM: Technical Solutions Sophomore Community at UMass Amherst

The Technical Solutions Sophomore community is a pilot program for the 2013 – 2014 academic year at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. This program is a partnership between Residence Education and the College of Engineering that

provides sophomore students in STEM fields with unique opportunities both within their field of study and as second year students at the university.

The SophoMORE program is a university-wide initiative aimed at providing a comprehensive experience to students in their second year at the university. The goal of the program is to assist students in overcoming the “sophomore slump” by providing opportunities to create relationships within their major and college, expand their social network, connect with faculty and academic advisors, and participate in opportunities to become leaders and mentors.

The Technical Solutions community is unique in that it pairs one first-year hall and one SophoMORE hall under the same supervision. This pairing provides further opportunities for collaboration, in that students in the SophoMORE hall have ample opportunity to share their knowledge of both their fields of study and of the university at large with the students in the first-year hall. The Resident Assistants for the community regularly take advantage of this dynamic by incorporating opportunities for mentor/mentee relationships into their educational programs. RAs in the SophoMORE building have paired students who have taken introductory Engineering courses with first-year students to create study groups, and collaborate by pairing a floor from the SophoMORE building with a floor from the first-year building to participate in a social activity together.

The Technical Solutions community kicked off the year by putting together a barbecue for students and the faculty of their college, including the Dean of the College of Engineering. Students were also given different colored t-shirts that coordinated with their major within the college, allowing for natural conversation as students easily identified other students who shared their major.

Technical Solutions is off to a strong start, thanks in large part to a motivated student staff and a strong connection to our academic partners within the College of Engineering. As the year moves forward, we are looking for more opportunities to incorporate the common theme of Engineering into the residential component of our students' experiences, while also adding ways to meet the needs of our residents as sophomores and providing opportunities to occasionally take pause from academics within an academic themed community.



PROGRAM: No Friend Left Behind Campaign, Endicott College

The logo for the “No Friend Left Behind” Campaign shows a street sign with 3 people on it. The following analogy shows why this image, in particular, is so important to the NFLB campaign. Imagine you are driving down the highway, it is late at night, you are tired, stressed, and anxious to get home. You haven’t been paying much attention, and in fact, don’t really recall the past mile or so that you have been driving. To your right, you notice a sign that says “55 MPH”. You look at your own speedometer and see that you are going 75. You tap the break, slowing down, and on the right you notice a State Trooper waiting to give someone a ticket.

Life happens. We get stressed out. We get caught up in our own “stuff” and forget to pay attention to the consequences. We are anxious and scared and sometimes resort to unhealthy and high-risk behavior because it gives us a sense of release. We are not always thinking about how our decisions in the moment can, and will, impact our future.

It is our aim to encourage Endicott students to step up and help one another. If you see someone “distracted” by life and not thinking clearly about the consequences of their actions, REACH out and do something. Remember, the MAJORITY of you are making healthy decisions, you recognize the consequences of your actions, and you know where to turn for support if you need it. It is our hope that this MAJORITY will make themselves visible and vocal, and will stand up and speak out when they see behaviors that put students and our Endicott community at risk – that they will leave no friend behind.

HAVE A PROMISING PRACTICE YOU WANT TO SHARE? EMAIL ERICA HEDRICK at EHEDRICK@ENDICOTT.EDU



CHRL Awards Nominations

Recognize Great Work!

It is never too early to start thinking about recognition! Since 1977, the Commission for Housing and Residential Life has recognized outstanding achievements and contributions in the field of student housing. The 2013–2014 Commission Directorate Body is proud to carry on the coordination of this important tradition.

SUBMIT YOUR AWARD NOMINATIONS

TODAY: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013CHRL-AWARDS>

The Commission Awards include:

- Outstanding Undergraduate Student Staff Member
- Outstanding Graduate Student Staff Member
- Outstanding New Professional (In their first three years of professional employment)
- Outstanding Experienced Professional: Two categories – 4–9 years, 10 or more years
- Excellence in Service (non–ResLife student or professional staff person)
- Excellence in Sustainability: Two categories – Program, Individual
- Outstanding Innovation in Housing and Residential Life

Full descriptions can be found at <http://www2.myacpa.org/housing-awards/housing-award-descriptions2>.

Awards submissions are due by November 16, 2013 so nominate your colleagues today at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2013CHRL-AWARDS!>

Questions? Email Troy Seppelt at tseppelt@coloradomesa.edu regarding the awards process for the Commission for Housing and 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!

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The next newsletter is coming in November!
Use the link above if you have articles, announcements or information you'd like to submit!



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