

## **What RAs Can Do to Promote a Healthy Academic Environment**

- Promote the Academic Support Center (ASC) and using the library
- Enforce Quiet Hours
- Utilize bulletin boards for listing campus resources regarding academics
- Encourage study groups or partners
- Put a list up of everyone's majors or strengths for others to utilize
- Create a class list so residents can find common classes and form study groups
- Plan study breaks
- BE THE EXAMPLE—go to class, study with your door open, etc
- Bring in favorite professors for informal conversations with your residents
- Encourage balance between social and academic life
- Ask your residents how classes are going
- Inform residents how to approach and utilize their professors
- Talk with residents that are not attending classes regularly—encourage and support
- Suggest time management skills
- Share past successes and failures with residents
- Encourage healthy living habits—sleep is so important!
- Try to enforce the use of computer labs for academic purposes first over leisure activities
- Connect residents with Career Services, and use Career Services for programs

## **Strategies for Outreach**

- Attend cultural events on campus
- Offer support to the Black Student Union, La Raza Unida, HAPA
- Place an Ally or Equality sticker in your room
- Go to concerts or dances that play cultural music
- Go to an African American church, Hispanic church, or attend a religious ceremony that is different than your own beliefs
- Read books and articles with information about different cultures
- Rent movies and documentaries that promote cultural diversity
- Reflect on your own personal biases, and attempt to eliminate them from your work
- Take action to establish meaningful friendships with people of different races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations
- Develop the ability to listen and communicate
- Work to eliminate policies that are discriminatory
- Seek to educate yourself on your heritage, including any negative aspects
- Become aware that racist patterns still exist in today's society
- Take risks
- Learn different social support systems in the community
- Sample foods from different cultures
- Learn a few words in another language
- Take opportunities to travel outside the country
- Continue to be creative in your quest to reach out to groups from other cultures



## **Strategies for being an Effective Ally**

- Assume that all people in your own group, including yourself, want to be allies to people in other groups. Assume that you in particular are good enough and smart enough to be an effective ally. (This does not mean that you have nothing more to learn).
- Assume that all people in the target group want members of your group, and you in particular, as allies. Assume that they recognize you as such, at least potentially.
- Assume that any appearances to the contrary (any apparent rejections of you as an ally) are the result of the target group's experiences of oppression and internalized oppression.
- Assume that people in the target group are already communicating to you in the best way they can at the present time. Assume that they can and will do better. Think about how to assist them in this without making your support dependent on their "improving" in any way. (Think about what has been helpful for you when you were in the target group position.)
- Assume that people in the target group are experts on their own experiences and that you have much to learn from them.
- Recognize that as a non-target person you are an expert on being conditioned to take the oppressor role. This means that you know the content of the lies that have been told about the target group. Don't let timidity force you into pretended ignorance.
- Assume that people in the target group are survivors and that they have a long history of resistance. Become an expert on this history and assist them to take full pride in it.
- Become an expert on all of the issues that are of concern to people in the target group, especially the issues that are most closely tied to their internalized oppression.
- Recognize that people in the target group can spot "oppressor-role-conditioning." Do not bother with trying to "convince" them that this conditioning did not happen to you. Don't attempt to convince target-group people that you "Oare on their side." Just be there.
- Do not expect gratitude from people in the target group and thoughtfully interrupt it if it is offered to you. Remember, being an ally is matter of your choice. It is not an obligation; it is something you get to do.
- Assume that acting as an ally is also acting for your own benefit. (Think about the hardships entailed in the conditioning of a non-target group into oppressor roles.)
- Be an ally 100%—no deals, no strings attached, such as, "I'll oppose your oppression if you oppose mine." Everyone's oppression needs to be opposed unconditionally.



## **Inclusive Communities**

*The following are different ways to promote and create inclusive communities in your residence hall.*

### **Ways to promote an Inclusive Communities**

- **Act**—Do something. In the face of hatred, apathy will be interpreted as acceptance—by the haters, the public, and worse, the victim.
- **Unite**—Call a friend or co-worker. Organize a group of allies from churches, schools, clubs and other civic sources.
- **Create an alternative**—Find another outlet for anger and frustration and people’s desire to do something. Do NOT attend a hate rally.
- **Speak Up**
- **Teach Tolerance**

*Above information provided by: Ten ways to Fight Hate: [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)*

## **Tolerance**

Tolerance entails toleration of a wide range of beliefs and moral values, and it would allow individuals and groups the opportunity to express fully their diverse beliefs, practices, and life stances. This principle presupposes an open, pluralistic and democratic society, which respects civil liberties and human rights. It also encourages intellectual, artistic, scientific, religious, philosophical, and moral freedom.

It is important to ask and assess some of the following questions:

- What does “diversity” mean to me? Why is it important and how will it fit in my future professional and personal goals?
- How have I consciously incorporated this belief within my circle of influence?
- How have I educated myself about others that are culturally different from me? What efforts or steps have I undertaken to make myself more “multiculturally” competent?
- What impacts have I had upon students in this regard? What initiatives, traditions, and celebrations have I started or participated in?



## **25 Ways to Promote Acceptance**

The following statements are provided to assist you in presenting to others what you have learned about diversity and acceptance.

- Do team-building activities in group meetings on a regular basis.
- Always challenge others to think about alternative ideas/solutions in a decision-making process.
- If someone states an opinion/idea, always thank them for their rationale/justification/facts, etc. that support their position.
- Use social and meeting opportunities to share any new thoughts or ideas you've learned in class, from a movie, from reading, etc.
- Reward new, innovative, and creative ideas from community members.
- Challenge students to "take on" the perspective of others and try to discuss how they might feel, what the needs/issues, etc.
- Use "I wonder..." statements to explore alternative issues/ideas instead of directly stating your opinion:
  - "I wonder what \_\_\_\_ might think/say with regard to this issue..."
  - "I wonder how \_\_\_\_ might feel?"
  - "I wonder why they might have said/done that..."
  - "I wonder what might happen if..."
- Use speakers/trainers who represent a wide diversity of social groups.
- Use different creativity techniques in meetings.
- Pair up student to have a meal with one other each week.
- If the group is in conflict, have them first identify their goals and areas in which they agree, and then identify areas for further discussion.
- Model good listening/conflict skills.
- Model openness to new ideas/feedback.
- Whenever making a decision, encourage the group to always brainstorm/review a wide range of options before narrowing their alternatives.
- Work collaboratively with other groups/departments on joint projects for different programming themes throughout the year, including: Black History Month, sexual assault week; gay, lesbian and bisexual awareness week; alcohol awareness month, etc.
- Hold follow-up discussions/panels after speakers, movies and events.
- Carefully select movies/speakers to deliberately promote acceptance of diversity.
- Provide activities that compliment those sponsored by other groups around diversity themes.
- Sponsor a reading/discussion group (support group) for members of dominant groups.
- Sponsor diversity awareness week(s).
- Bring up issues/topics in casual/social discussions as meals/social activities.
- Pass out articles/pamphlets/books
- Rethink how to use bulletin board space to celebrate diversity and teach about oppression.
- Sponsor a contest for ideas/strategies for fighting oppression.

*Adapted from: The Human Advantage, by Kathy Obeaf, 1989, pp. 26-28, and Think Global Act Local, Michigan State University, 1980, pp. 79-80.*



## Diversity Dictionary

### A

**African-American** (adj) - Relating to the culture of African Americans.

**African American** (n) - 1. Refers to Black individuals living in the United States with African ancestry. 2. Refers to individuals of African heritage living in the United States having similar experiences, culture heritage and ancestry of former slaves.

**ageism** (n) - Discrimination of individuals based on their age, i.e. of the elderly based on the notion that they are incapable of performing certain functions such as driving, or of the young based on the notion that they are immature and therefore incapable of performing certain tasks.

**ally** (n) - An individual that supports the struggles of a group; not part of the group him/herself.

**Anti-Semitism (or Anti-Semitism)** (n) - Hatred toward Jews; prejudicial belief in the "racial" or religious inferiority of Jews. The term itself was first used in 1879.

**Asian-American** (adj) - Relating to the culture of Asian Americans.

**Asian American** (n) - Refers to individuals living in the United States with Asian ancestry.

### B

**bisexual** (n) - Individuals attracted to members of the male and female sex.

### C

**class** (n) - Category of division based on economic status; members of a class are theoretically assumed to possess similar cultural, political and economic characteristics and principles.

**classism** (n) - Discrimination based on class.

### D

**Diaspora** (n) - A historical dispersion of a group of people deriving from similar origins, i.e. the African Diaspora includes African Americans, Africans, Caribbeans, Afro-Russians, Black Brazilians, Afro Latinos etc...

**disadvantaged** (adj) - 1. A historically oppressed group having less than sufficient resources to fund all of basic needs; without expendable income. 2. A group characterized by disproportionate economic, social, and political disadvantages.

**discrimination** (n) - A biased decision based on a prejudice against an individual group characterized by race, class, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, etc . . .



**diversity** (n) - A situation that includes representation of multiple (ideally all) groups within a prescribed environment, such as a university or a workplace. This word most commonly refers to differences between cultural groups, although it is also used to describe differences within cultural groups, e.g. diversity within the Asian-American culture includes Korean Americans and Japanese Americans. An emphasis on accepting and respecting cultural differences by recognizing that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another underlies the current usage of the term.

### E

**emigrant** (n) - One who leaves his/her country of origin to reside in a foreign country.

**ethnicity** (n) - A quality assigned to a specific group of people historically connected by a common national origin or language. Ethnic classification is used for identification rather than differentiation.

**essentialism** (n) - The practice of categorizing a group based on an artificial social construction that imparts an "essence" of that group, which homogenizes the group and effaces individuality and difference.

**ethnicity** (n) - A quality assigned to a specific group of people historically connected by a common national origin or language. Ethnic classification is used for identification rather than differentiation.

**ethnocentrism** (n) - A practice of unconsciously or consciously privileging a certain ethnic group over others. This involves judging other groups by the values of one's own group.

**Eurocentrism** (n) - The practice of consciously or unconsciously privileging the culture of Europe over other cultures.

**European-American** (adj) - Relating to the culture of European Americans.

**European American** (n) - An individual living in the United States with European ancestry.

### F

**feminism** (n) - Movement advocating equal rights, status, ability, and treatment of women, based on the belief that women are not in any way inferior to men.

### G

**gay** (n) - A male homosexual.

**gay** (adj) - Pertaining to male homosexuality.

**gender** (n) - System of sexual classification based on the social construction of the categories "men" and "women," as opposed to sex which is based on biological and physical differences which form the categories "male" and "female."

**glass ceiling** (n) - Term for the maximum position and salary some claim minorities and women are allowed to reach without any chances of further promotion or advancement within an employment scenario.



H

**heterosexism** (n) - Social structures and practices which serve to elevate and enforce heterosexuality while subordinating or suppressing other forms of sexuality.

**heterosexual** (adj) - Pertaining to individuals attracted to the opposite sex.

**Hispanic-American** (adj) - Pertaining to Americans with direct ancestry from Hispanic, or Spanish-speaking countries.

**Hispanic American** (n) - Individuals living in the United States with ancestry from Hispanic, that is Spanish-speaking countries.

**homosexual** (adj) - Individuals attracted to members of one's own sex.

I

**immigrant** (n) - A person who resides in a nation, country, or region other than that of his/her origin. Also known as nonnative, outlander, outsider, alien, etc . . . (ant. emigrant)

**indigenous** (adj.) - Originating from a culture with ancient ties to the land in which a group resides.

J

**Jew(s)** (n) - members of a people based on a background of shared historical experience and of religious heritage (Judaism). Membership is through birth or conversion. Not all Jews are religious. Most North American Jews are descended from immigrants from Eastern Europe. Jews can be understood in both ethnic and religious terms.

K

L

**latino/a** (n) - Individual living in the United States originating from, or having a heritage relating to Latin America.

**lesbian** (n) - Female homosexual.

**lesbian** (adj) - Pertaining to female homosexuality.

M

**minority** (n) - Term used to describe a group that represents a relatively smaller percentage of the overall population of a nation/state/ continent etc. . .

**multiculturalism** (n) - The practice of acknowledging and respecting the various cultures, religions, races, ethnicities, attitudes and opinions within an environment.



### N

**national origin** (n) - System of classification based on nation from which a person originates, regardless of the nation in which he/she currently resides.

**Native-American** (adj) - Refers to the descendants of the various indigenous populations that occupied the land now designated America.

**neo-colonialization** (n) - Term for contemporary policies adopted by international and western "1st world" nations and organizations that exert regulation, power and control over poorer "3rd world" nations disguised as humanitarian help or aid. These policies are distinct from but related to the "original" period of colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas by European nations.

### O

**oriental** (adj) - Relating to or deriving from the language, traditions, or cultures of the peoples of Asian nations in the region designated as "the Orient," or "the East," by Europeans. This term is conspicuously eurocentric as "the East" is constructed as being opposed to a fixed reference point, "the West," or western Europe.

### P

**Pan-Africanism** (n) - 1. Describes the theory relating to the desire to educate all peoples of the African Diaspora of their common plight and of the connections between them, e.g. a problem faced by one group affects the lives of other groups as well. 2. Theory relating to the desire to link all African countries across the continent through a common government, language, ideology, or belief.

**people of color** (n) - A term used to describe all non-white racial or ethnic groups.

**prejudice** (v) - Exerting bias and bigotry based on uniformed stereotypes.

**privilege** (n) - Power and advantages benefiting a group derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other groups.

### Q

### R

**race** (n) - 1. Classification of humans based on genetic characteristics. 2. Classification of people based on common nationality, history, or experiences.

**racism** (n) - An act of discrimination based on an ideology of racial superiority.

**religion** (n) - 1. An organized belief system based on certain tenets of faith. 2. A belief in a supreme supernatural force or god(s)



S

**sex** (n) - System of sexual classification based on biological and physical differences, such as primary and secondary sexual characteristics, forming the categories "male" and "female" as opposed to gender which is based on the social construction of the categories "men" and "women."

**stereotype** (v) - To categorize people based on an artificial construction of a certain group designed to impart the "essence" of that group, which homogenizes the group, effacing individuality and difference.

**social constructionism** (n) - A perception of an individual, group, or idea that is "constructed" through cultural and social practice, but appears to be "natural," or "the way things are." For example, the idea that women "naturally" like to do housework is a social construction because this idea appears "natural" due to its historical repetition, rather than it being "true" in any essential sense.

T

**tolerance** (n) - Acceptance and open-mindedness to different practices, attitudes, and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences.

U, V, W, X, Y, Z

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/Diversity/Reference/divdic.html>



## **Confronting Issues of Prejudice**

- Do not ignore it!
  - Do not let an ethnic slur or joke pass with out remark. To do so sends the message that you are in agreement with such behavior or attitudes.
- Be aware of your own hesitancies to intervene in these situations
  - Confront your own fears about interrupting discrimination, set your priorities, and take action.
- Be open to the limitations your own attitudes, stereotypes, and expectations place on your perspective.
  - None of us remain untouched by the discriminatory images and behaviors we have been socialized to believe.
- Do not be afraid of possible tension or conflict
  - In certain situations, it may be unavoidable. These are sensitive and deep-seated issues that will not change without some struggle.
- Project a feeling of understanding when discriminatory events occur.
- Explain and engage when you confront prejudice. Try not to preach or be self-righteous.
- Eradicating racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc...is a long-term struggle requiring continuous change and growth.
  - Try not to get too frustrated
- Be a role model
  - Practice the positive values you are trying to teach.
- Distinguish between categorical thinking and stereotyping
  - For example, “redheads” is a category, but “redheads have fiery tempers” is a stereotype.
- Remember that issues of human dignity, equality, and safety are non-negotiable.

*Adapted from Patti DeRose, The Multicultural Project, communication and Education, Inc., Cambridge, MA.*



## Potential Student Care Issues

### First Year Students

#### Descriptors:

- Friendly
- Outgoing
- Energetic
- Adventurous
- Global thinking
- Dependent
- Needy
- Come from single parent/dysfunctional homes
- Want to have fun

#### Needs/Issues/Concerns

- To be accepted
- Figuring out they you are in the midst of new freedom
- Discerning how to handle their freedom (discretionary time)
- Strained family relations
- Academics
- Decision-making about own life
- Adjusting to community life
- Dealing with emotions and expressing them appropriately
- Respect within the community

#### Ways to address their needs:

- Structure within the community (policy/rules)
- Relationships—activities
- Proactive with roommate agreements and community agreements
- Holding them accountable
- Supporting the academic environment
- Educating (consequences to actions)

#### Things for staff to keep in mind when working with this population:

- Setting guidelines and holding them accountable
- Patience
- Remember that it's not always black-and-white when approaching a situation
- Be a resource! Help them find answers for themselves



**Second Year Students**

**Descriptors**

- More pompous
- Comfortable

**Needs/Issues/Concerns**

- Gaining a new group of friends second year. Let go of first year friends
- Decision-making year
- Pick a major
- “I don’t need an RA.” Think they have college figured out
- Finishing core—taking classes they want
- Rebellion year—comfortable with college, go out and party but not old enough yet
- Who do I live with and where? I want to get out of the hall. Who’s going to be an RA?
- Not as scared of academic failure
- Disillusioned by roommate conflict since they picked to live with them

**Ways to address their needs**

- Programs about choosing majors
- Give them respect, but challenge them. Help them realize they’re still at the beginning.

**Things to keep in mind when working with this population**

- Programs on housing
- Be mindful that this is when people transfer



## **Third Year Students**

### **Descriptors**

- Searching for meaning
- Have established friends/social circles
- Established place in community, at school; found friends and a major
- Been around long enough to know the rules and the system
- On the cusp

### **Needs/Issues/Concerns**

- Direction
- Imminent decision-making
- What will major bring them to?
- Juniors go abroad—need to explore, bring “newness” to the experience. “This is my chance to...”
- Internships—want to taste real world but not fully; still need cushion
- Family pressures—what family wants them to do balanced with their own wants
- Reality checks

### **Ways to address their needs**

- Career development and resume development—figure out skills/gifts
- Challenge them to be more intentional with life goals
- How to translate college experience into real life
- They know what their experience is but not sure how it fits in

### **Things for staff to keep in mind when working with this population**

- Want friends/companions, not someone to tell them what to do or shake fingers at them
- Already or are turning 21
- Want to be treated with respect: “Respect me and my experience.”



## **Fourth Year Students**

### **Descriptors**

- Adults
- Focused on academics/future
- Burnt-out
- Leaders
- Experienced
- Reflective

### **Needs/Issues/Concerns**

- Jobs/careers
- Independence
- Transition from college to next step
- Development of critical thinking skills and judgment
- Display empathy for situation
- Promote self-confidence and self-esteem
- Recognize their identity as seniors and transition stage

### **Things for staff to keep in mind when working with this population**

- They desire independence
- They are adults capable of making their decision and responsible for those
- Parental influence



## **Mediating Roommate Conflicts**

1. Ask all roommates to sit down with you and talk about the problem. Set a specific date and time for the meeting. Select a neutral location (RA room, hall office).
2. Establish ground rules.
  - Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
  - Treat each other politely.
  - Listen and be open-minded.
  - No name calling or blaming is permitted.
  - Speak to one another about your concerns, not to me.
  - Use “I” statements (I don’t like it when...).
  - Put a time limit to the meeting (45 minutes to an hour).
3. Have each person tell their own story.
4. Utilize reflective listening.
  - Attending—physical listening, demonstrating interest
  - Empathy—ability to see that person’s side of the story
  - Rephrasing—reflect back what the person has said in your own words
  - Reframing—neutralizing inflammatory statements, confront inappropriate statements that are made
5. Ask questions. Make sure each roommate is understanding what the other is saying.
6. Tips for conversation:
  - Allow uninterrupted time—don’t rush.
  - List the issues, and group those that are similar.
  - Keep the list short and manageable.
  - Focus on the issues that are negotiable.
  - Don’t debate policy.
7. Generate options.
  - Start with the easier issues first.
  - Have the roommates brainstorm options. You can suggest yours as well.
  - Ask “What does this mean?” or “What if \_\_\_\_ happens?”
8. Draw up or revise a roommate agreement.
  - List what both parties have agreed to.
  - Go over each point, who agreed to what.
  - Remain objective and neutral at all times.
  - Be specific.
  - Everyone should sign and date the agreement, and all roommates get copies.
9. Follow up with the roommates, and be sure to let your RLC/RD/NC know what is going on.

