

Residential Life Mission Statement

Mission

To create a residential living environment that engages individuals in the development of their human potential; is responsive to the continually changing needs of students; respects, embraces, and celebrates the uniqueness of all people; fosters the development of well-rounded individuals; and actively supports and contributes to the academic and Christian mission of the institution.

Shared Values

COMMITMENT: We are committed to putting students first. Challenging and supporting students in their growth and development is our priority.

HONESTY, INTEGRITY and TRUST: In all interactions, with all people, at all times, by everyone.

INITIATIVE and LEADERSHIP: All Residential Life Staff members are accountable and responsible for the results of our program. Each individual is expected to take initiative and provide leadership.

EXCELLENCE: Committed to uncompromising professionalism, compassion and care.

LIFELONG LEARNING and EDUCATION: Providing opportunities to gain lifeskills which contribute to success today as a member of the Hope Community as well as tomorrow in our ever-changing world.

CARING and COMPASSION: For students and each other at all times.

INTERDEPENDENCE: Fostering a true understanding that no person, staff, or department functions alone. Our success depends on unity.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY: Effectively managing departmental resources in a creative, innovative and responsible manner.

PROACTIVE and FORWARD-LOOKING: Striving to continuously improve the quality of our program and facilities. We recognize that we must anticipate the future and position ourselves to best serve the needs of our current and future students.



Theory

Chickering's Theory of Psychosocial Development in College

Arthur Chickering looked at some of the developmental crises that college students between the ages of 17 and 24 face as they develop and realize that their behavior does not line up with the social expectations of their age. He identified seven vectors, or themes, that occur as people develop during college.

1. Developing Competence

There are three kinds of competence that college students must develop: intellectual, physical, and social-interpersonal. Intellectual competence is developed as students desire to succeed academically. Physical competence comes as students will compare themselves to others physically. They want to make sure they have the same physical skills as other students. Finally, social-interpersonal competence is gained through finding a sense of belonging. Students need to feel that they fit in with other students and find strong relationships with others.

2. Managing Emotions

Students learning to manage their emotions have to decide why they behave as they do. Students will have a shift in their locus of control. They will learn to do behaviors for internal reasons rather than solely for external reasons. This process involves four sequential steps. The first is becoming aware of one's emotions. Second, the student must learn how to behave because of these emotions. Next, the student should listen to others' input about these emotions. Finally, the student will recognize the internal control he or she has over his or her behavior.

3. Developing Autonomy

To develop autonomy, students must become emotionally independent and learn to be responsible for himself or herself. This allows students to realize their independence. Sometimes this involves an emotional and/or financial separation from the parents. Many students do not become independent of their parents during college, and that can hinder this stage of growth.

4. Establishing Identity

During this part of development, students learn to understand themselves. They also need to learn to be comfortable with themselves. The development of identity begins in childhood and extends throughout the life. The process is helped along with the three earlier vectors. There are gender differences in the identity formation of college students. Men more often are concerned with issues of vocation, and women think more about relationships and the issues surrounding intimacy and attachment.

5. Freeing Interpersonal Relationships

At this point, college students learn to have more trust in the relationships they have with others. This happens because they know more about themselves. Students tend to be more at ease with others, and often stereotypes are forgotten as students come to respect others.



6. Clarifying Purpose

Clarifying purpose involves looking into career plans and goals. Throughout college, students are making plans for their future but begin to think about this more seriously as graduation looms closer for junior and senior students. In this vector, students make commitments that will bring them into their adult lives. They decide on a vocation, find their interests outside of this vocation, develop a life style, and form values.

7. Developing Integrity

In this final vector, students learn to apply social rules to their own lives. They come to figure out that the world is not black and white—they find the gray areas. Students also learn to behave how they believe. Integrity is developed as students grow and deal with situations in which they are faced with choosing between conflicting values that they hold.

Adapted from The Resident Assistant, by Gregory Blimling, 1995, pp. 107-118.

Boyer's Principles of Community

Ernest L. Boyer wrote six principles of community for how decisions should be made on a college or university campus.

1. *Purposeful* community

Students and faculty both work together to create an environment in which academics are taken seriously and goals are encouraged.

2. *Open* community

Members of the campus community should be allowed to express themselves freely, and others in the community should defend these rights. Those speaking carefully consider their language to be sure they are respecting others in the community. Those not speaking should listen to understand.

3. *Just* community

A campus community must look for opportunities to increase involvement of people underrepresented in a college or university setting. College and university communities also must strive to respect each individual student.

4. *Disciplined* community

Students on a college or university campus must be given clear guidelines about their behavior and an explanation about how these rules impact the common good of the community. Students should also come to recognize their part in the community to fully accept the guidelines.

5. *Caring* community

Students on a college or university campus should have care and concern for others and be willing to connect with those in need. Students should become aware that the campus community is an interdependent community—no one in the community can exist without the others in the community.



6. *Celebrative* community

Colleges and universities should hold to the traditions that they have practiced in the past. This will help to build community and encourage a sense of connection with others in the community.

Adapted from Campus Life: In Search of Community, by Ernest L. Boyer, 1990, pp. 1-67.

Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg wrote about the three levels of moral development that people experience in their lives. Each level has two stages that make up the level.

1. Preconventional Level (Egocentrism)

People at this level learn the social rules as their parents teach them. They learn from the consequences of their actions—rewards and punishments. At this level, people see how they relate to authority. The first stage of this level is about avoiding punishment. People learn to react to authority. The second stage is about gaining rewards. People act in order to earn a reward from someone in authority for their good behavior.

2. Conventional Level (Sociocentrism)

People at this level of moral development make decisions that will fit in with social norms and expectations. At this level, people learn to see themselves as part of a group, and eventually, they see themselves as part of society. The third stage involves looking for approval from family or the peer group. People at this stage focus on what a good person would do. The fourth stage is when people make moral decisions because they want to obey the social laws. They understand that rules are there to preserve peace in society.

3. Postconventional Level (Allocentrism)

Before stages five and six, developing people will try to make their values their own. They will work to understand justice and make decisions based on that understanding. At this level, people see themselves as responsible to society and then to humanity. The fifth stage occurs when a person has concern for the rights of individuals. They want to make sure that there is justice for others. The sixth stage is “the universal ethical principle orientation.” People at this stage will want to make sure that their decisions match their consciences and focus on principles, not rules.

Many first year college students are in stage three of moral reasoning. As students develop and rely less on their peers, they move into stage four—which is where most people in society are. Once students learn that they must make their own decisions about issues of morals, they move on to stage five. They learn to make decisions by looking at issues through a lens of ethical principles.

Adapted from The Resident Assistant, by Gregory Blimling, 1995, pp. 125-129.



RA Position Overview

- **Student Interaction**
 - Develop and maintain positive and meaningful relationships with residents
 - Serve as an academic and social role model
 - Maintain availability to residents on a daily basis
 - Maximize availability to assist students during orientation, final exams, and other times as needed
 - Encourage interpersonal and group interactions among residents
 - Identify and offer assistance to students who have personal, academic, health, or other concerns
 - Refer students as needed to appropriate professionals
 - Maintain confidentiality
- **Community Development**
- **Encourage community responsibility and individual rights**
 - Assess needs and wants of residents
 - Initiate a variety of intentional social and educational programs for the hall (wing/floor/cluster), cottage, or apartment
 - Facilitate discussion, creation, implementation, and enforcement of community agreement
 - Assist with resident concerns including roommate conflicts and mediation needs, involving RLC/RD/NC as necessary
- **Foster an environment that recognizes and embraces a diverse world**
 - Create a community that is inclusive of all residents
 - Implement activities that increase students' awareness of diversity issues
 - Respond to student behavior which is inappropriate/discriminatory/ harassing in nature (i.e. racial, ethnic, religious, ability, gender or sexual orientation)
- **Learning Focus**
- **Create a dynamic learning environment that challenges students to grow in mind, body, and spirit**
 - Be familiar with and educate others about campus personnel, resources, and procedures
 - Respond to student behavior which may be indicative of academic concerns
 - Establish and maintain an environment that is supportive of successful academic achievement
 - Help students utilize academic and career resources on campus
- **Policy Enforcement**
 - Explain and enforce college policies and regulations as stated in the Hope College Student Handbook
 - Consistently document all violations and participate as required in the judicial process
 - Encourage resident accountability
 - Maintain confidentiality as appropriate in all related matters
- **Staff Support**
 - Work as a team to create community within hall/cottage/apartment and the larger Hope residential community
 - Support all staff
 - Involve RLC/RD/NC appropriately in hall/cottage/apartment matters
 - Communicate effectively with other staff members
 - Flexibility and willingness to take on assignments as necessitated by the Department or your supervisor
 - Understand, support, and articulate the mission and values of the Department of Residential Life



Administration

• **Facilities and Operations**

- Work to ensure safe, comfortable facilities that meet the needs of students
- Assist in check-in and check-out procedures
- Ensure the completion of accurate and thorough room condition reports
- Educate residents about safety issues and their role and responsibility in maintaining a clean and safe living environment
- Support maintenance and custodial staff
- Maintain positive working relationship with Housing and Student Development staff and Campus Safety
- Communicate effectively and timely with RLC/RD/NC about facilities concerns, work orders, reports of theft/vandalism, etc.
- Be aware of the living environment and makes recommendations for improvement where appropriate
- Take initiative to address safety concerns- door propping, smoking in the building, tampering with fire alarms, abuse of kitchen facilities, etc.

• **Staff Communication**

- Submit paperwork in timely manner—duty switches, duty logs, incident reports, work orders, supply requests, weekly reports, program planners, program evaluations, etc.
- Make referrals as appropriate and maintain accurate records of such actions
- Carefully and thoughtfully plan, implement, and evaluate community development needs and activities
- Create and utilize publicity and advertising for community activities that reflect and support the mission of the college and the Office of Residential Life
- Participate in staff evaluation process by disseminating feedback forms to residents and complete evaluation of the RLC/RD/NC



Departmental Requirements and Expectations

- **Academic Standing**
 - Maintain at least 8 credits at Hope College
 - Achieve a 2.5 grade point average from the time of hiring to the end of the RA contract
- **Training**
 - Full participation in all staff training and development, including August and January staff training, monthly departmental in-services, and weekly staff meetings and developments
- **Commitments Outside the RA Position**
 - All employment commitments and extra-curricular activities—including participation in Pull, Nykerk, or joining a Greek organization—must have the prior approval of your supervisor
 - The RA position is expected to take precedence over all co-curricular and work commitments. RAs may be asked to cut back on commitments which interfere with their ability to be successful in the RA position
 - RAs are not allowed to work more than 10 hours per week outside the RA position
- **Individual Time Away**
 - Each staff member is allowed 10 nights away each semester—those 10 days are in addition to Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break
 - All vacation/travel plans must meet the approval of your supervisor
- **Closing College Housing at the End of each Semester**
 - At the closing of college housing at the end of each semester, all staff are expected to stay to complete their closing responsibilities
 - Early departure for breaks and/or not fulfilling your closing responsibilities may result in job action and/or an ineligibility for future employment with the Department of Residential Life
- **Appointment and Returning to the RA position**
 - The RA position is an appointment for one academic year—August 16, 2007 to May 5, 2008
 - Reappointment for a second year in the position is contingent upon the quality of the job performance. A third year is reserved for exceptional staff members
- **Room Assignment**
 - The Department of Residential Life will assign individuals to a residence hall/cottage/apartment based on departmental need
 - Reassignment of the initial placement may be necessary in rare cases
- **Accountability**
 - Termination from the RA position will be based on unsatisfactory job performance or breach of the RA contract.
 - The following acts, if committed by a Resident Assistant, will cause close evaluation of the staff member's ability to be successful in the RA position and may warrant dismissal from the position: violation of college policy, Residential Life regulations, local ordinance, state statute or federal law; misuse of official keys; refusal to comply with the reasonable job-related request of a supervisor; acts of negligence or incompetence which cause reasonable doubt of satisfactory job performance; underage consumption of alcohol, staff members of legal drinking age supplying students or staff who are underage with alcohol, or irresponsible acts regarding the use of alcohol
 - Upon termination, Residential Life has the right to transfer the RA's housing assignment or terminate the housing agreement



Roles of an RA

The bottom line...you are hired for your residents. You are here to build community and be intentional about how that happens. You are to get people connected—to one another, to the college, to their academic success—and hopefully you'll grow and have some fun in the process.

It is only fair that you have an understanding of what will be expected of you as a Resident Assistant. Here are some *minimum* expectations. These are the non-negotiable parts of the job. This is not a complete list of expectations, but a starting point.

Community Builder

- Know all residents. You are expected to know your community and to best assess what it needs.
- Be available to your community.
- Use tools such as the roommate and community agreements as ways to encourage responsible group living and peer accountability.
- Provide community expectations that reflect the Christian mission of the institution.
- Access and respond to diversity education needs on your floor.
- Work to ensure a living environment where all residents are respected and comfortable.
- Make on-going efforts toward diversity education and cultural awareness.

Educator

- Provide at least six programs per semester following the CHIPS model.
- Implement programs that challenge students to grow in mind, body, spirit, and community.
- Participate in the planning and implementation of hall or neighborhood programming.
- Change your wing/floor/cluster bulletin board monthly, if you are in a hall.

Team Player

- If you have issues with someone or something, directly confront the source...speak *to* people, not *about* people.
- Publicly support your hall/neighborhood, the staff and Student Development.
- Staff issues remain staff issues and are never to be discussed with residents.
- Be on time for all meetings.
- Be an active and responsible member of the team.
- Act with integrity...do what you say.
- Speak honestly...say what you do.
- Follow the appropriate lines of communication and protocol.

Administrator

- Paperwork is to be fully completed and turned in on time.
- Incident reports are due by 9:00 AM after the incident.
- Check your staff mailbox and e-mail messages daily.

Role Model

- Do not violate any residence hall or college policies.
- Treat all residents with dignity and respect.
- Respond appropriately to feedback from students, peers, and supervisor.



Student

- Maintain a 2.5 semester and cumulative GPA.
- Utilize effective time management skills to balance academic needs and RA position expectations.
- Serve as a positive academic role model to residents.

Crisis Manager

- Keep your supervisor abreast of all critical incidents as they arise.
- Be able to quickly and appropriately respond according to the emergency procedures established.
- Know your limitations and refer students as appropriate.
- Hold important information in confidence, but do not bind yourself.

Policy Enforcer

- Confront all policy violations.
- Work pro-actively....set clear expectations with your community as to appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.
- Be consistent in your policy enforcement—as an individual and with your fellow staff members.
- Fulfill all duty responsibilities.

There will be "other duties as assigned". Know that we try to keep these to a minimum.

Please take some time and energy to think through these expectations. If at any point you do not think you can fulfill one or some of these minimum expectations, contact your supervisor to talk about it...it is necessary that you commit to these expectations and fully understand you will be held to these standards.

