Purpose
The Department of Residence Life contacted Student Life Studies to prepare an evaluation of Spring 2001 Resident Advisor (RA) Training. The training was for all in-hall staff including Hall Directors.

Method and Sample
Each participant was given an evaluation about a week after the end of training. Of the 180 staff members participating, 126 returned evaluations, yielding a 70% response rate. Of the 126 responses, 14% were Hall Directors, 83% were returning RAs and 4% were new RAs. The evaluation contained 44 questions, 6 of which were qualitative in nature.

The evaluation was created using Teleform© software that scans responses and reads handwriting. The results were evaluated using SPSS©, a statistical analysis software package.

Summary of Quantitative Results
All frequency percentages are rounded for ease of reading, so they may not add up to exactly 100%. Means are based on the scale provided in the description.

The first section of the survey reviewed the food for the 3 days that a meal was provided. A 3-point Likert scale was used, with 3 being the most positive response. The highest rated meal was Sbisa (2.92), followed closely by Fitzwilly’s (2.82). Papa John’s and Ag Café also rated fairly well at 2.69 and 2.62, respectively. Staff members were also pleased with the quantity of the food (4.80) and the quality (4.72), which was based on a 5-point Likert scale from “excellent” (5 points) to “poor” (1 point).

The Murder Mystery Investigation, which was a welcome back social on Sunday night, rated a 3.65 on a 5-point scale. About 59% of the respondents rated it as excellent or above average. The comments were mixed—some people liked the change of pace, while others thought that the time could have been better spent. The cold weather definitely appeared to be an issue with many participants. Some people did not get to socialize as much as they would have wanted.

The three interest session times and the roundtable programs provided options for staff to attend one session per time period. The frequency percentage results are shown in Table 1 below, using a 5-point Likert scale (excellent-above average-average-below average-poor). The means (arithmetic average) and the number of people (N) who attended each session are also reported.

Overall, the sessions were very well received. The highest rated sessions included Ohh La La, Mystery Machine, Albatross, and Nap Time. The highest rated roundtable focused on programming. The lowest rated sessions included Avoid the Noid, Who: your roommate, and I’m going to Pull My Hair Out. The lowest rated roundtable focused on co-ed vs. single gender housing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Back to your Roots (mean= 4.0, N=14)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie Bunker Mystery (mean=4.06, N=18)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Drew and the Mystery of What’s Outside the Box (mean=3.83, N=24)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a Mystery How Some People Say You Can Manage Time (mean=4.09, N=32)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Drew and the Mystery of What’s Outside the Box (mean=3.83, N=24)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Building is like a Man at a Gas Station with a Lit Cigarette… (mean=4.26, N=19)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery Machine (mean=4.55, N=20)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nap Time (mean=4.39, N=23)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m going to pull my hair out (mean=3.82, N=11)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning to work as a team (mean=4.10, N=20)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing your RA position (mean=4.07, N=29)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you believe? (mean=4.03, N=30)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t let the Bed Bugs Bite (mean=4.27, N=15)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid the Noid (mean=3.40, N=15)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohh La La (mean=4.56, N=15)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guns and Drugs (mean=4.27, N=22)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door Dec and Bulletin Board Swap Shop (mean=4.32, N=25)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who: your roommate (mean=3.40, N=15)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The spy game (mean=3.93, N=15)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albatross (mean=4.54, N=24)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming Roundtable (mean=4.02, N=44)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts and Confrontation Roundtable (mean=4.0, N=24)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Free Campus Roundtable (mean=3.86, N=14)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ed vs. Single Gender Housing Roundtable (mean=3.77, N=30)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Means and Frequency Percentages for Interest Session and Roundtables.

The next section focused on in-hall time. Approximately 84% of the respondents agreed that there was enough time to prepare for opening. Another 12% were neutral and 4% disagreed. Since opening in January tends to be less time consuming than August that response makes sense.
A majority of staff members (59%) do not want in-hall time to be spaced out over the course of training. About 29% were neutral about it and 12% wanted in-hall time to be spread out.

The RAs were asked if their Hall Director used the time they had together wisely. The vast majority (96%) agreed, with only 1% disagreeing. That indicates that Hall Director staff overall did a very good job using the time with their RAs.

The next section covered general questions about the training time. The format of training was useful for 79% of the respondents. Only 7% disagreed, and 14% were neutral about the format.

In addition, 68% said that training time was used wisely, although 25% were neutral about it, and 7% disagreed.

When asked if they felt motivated because of training, the responses were split. Forty-nine percent agreed, but 40% were neutral. While training is a necessary function, it may not be motivating for the staff.

On the other hand, when asked if their supervisor made them feel welcome when they arrived, 88% of the staff agreed, and 12% were neutral on the matter.

Overall, staff seemed to be satisfied with the process of training including the format, in-hall time, and sense of feeling welcome.

Summary of Qualitative Results
Staff members provided a lot of useful comments about training. The full listing of responses can be seen on the attached summary.

Specific comments about the Murder Mystery on Sunday night included:
- It was neat to get to interact with so many other RA's in a fun atmosphere right in the beginning. I could really tell a lot of work went into it and it made me feel like everyone was really glad we were back.
- The murder mystery was done very well and was entertaining but I thought it was kind of a waste of time that I could have spent making my door decs.
- It was all right but I hated to have to come all the way back from home a day early for it. Especially since it didn't have anything to do with the job.
- Really enjoyed it but I think it would have been better if we had smaller groups. Unavailable I know, but maybe in the future it could be optional. That way the people who really wanted to do it could.

Most people enjoyed the concept, although a few people thought it should have been optional. While the training committee has no control over the weather, many people mentioned that it was too cold to be outside.

Staff were asked about the highlights of spring training. Representative comments included:
- Only one day of interest sessions and lots of time for in hall.
• All day in hall. That was awesome b/c you could plan MUCH better. I also enjoyed the sections for returners and the categories that help to apply the RA job to the real world.

Other comments included the Murder Mystery, Albatross, and the food. There were a couple of positive comments about the amount of interaction between the RAs. Only a couple of negative comments were written.

Staff were asked about their ideas for future socials. Some of the representative ideas included:

- Bowling
- Karaoke
- Roller skating
- Movies
- Dancing
- Ice cream
- Pool
- Games

Staff were also asked what types of programs they would be interested in. Several people mentioned educational programming in general. Most of the suggestions were from a practical viewpoint—staff wanted something that they could use. Some of the other themes included:

- Bulletin Boards
- Risk management
- Crafts
- Program advertising
- Diversity

Staff also provided a long list of food suggestions. For some restaurants, there was mixed reviews—some people wanted to eat there while others specified the opposite. It probably is important to provide some variety within a meal for those people who are vegetarians, have a food allergy or do not like to eat beef, pasta, or other things. Freebirds was the most popular response. Others included Potato Shack, Roly Poly, and Subway.

When asked for future training theme ideas, staff provided a variety of ideas. Only a couple of people said that they didn’t necessarily like the theme idea; they just wanted it to be short and sweet. Some of the most popular responses included:

- Dr Seuss
- Hollywood celebrities/movies
- Cartoons
- Television shows
- Music
- Hawaiian

Conclusions and Implications
While it is hard to please everyone at the same time, training was a positive experience for staff overall. Most of the programs received high ratings. The training committee may want to take a
closer look at some of the interest sessions to determine why they were rated lower. It could be because of the presentation style, presenter skills, or program content. Alternatively, for the highest rated sessions, the training committee should determine if the content was relevant to the staff skill development. This evaluation did not ask detailed questions about each of the sessions. In the future, brief evaluations could be provided during the interest sessions that addressed content, presentation style, handouts, usefulness of the information, etc.

The training committee should reflect on their desired learning outcomes and goals of training. After sharing the goals of training with the staff, the committee may want to add achieved objectives as one aspect of future evaluations. While staff did not necessarily feel motivated because of training, is motivation an expected outcome of training? Or, are staff motivated regardless of training? In addition, what may be a goal for spring training, with many returning staff, may not have the same priority for the fall when there are many new staff members.

Based on the responses, in-hall time should probably be scheduled in large blocks of time rather than spread out. Staff probably feel that they can get more done, rather than having to start and stop what they are doing to do other things. Since almost everyone agreed that his or her Hall Director used time together wisely, the training committee may want to review what went right to replicate it in the future.

When planning social events, the training committee may want to determine and communicate whether events are mandatory or optional. While some staff “go with the flow”, others are more concerned with getting prepared for opening.

It may be helpful to have some follow up discussions with RA staff members to find out more details about the responses given; for example, discussing the individual sessions to get feedback on quality of presentation, usefulness of the information, etc. In addition, the ideas for future programs could also be a valuable discussion tool since some of the answers were fairly generic. For example, talking about exactly what RAs want to know about bulletin boards (how to, resources for, topics to cover, color combinations, etc.) will help steer resources and future training in the right direction.

It would be helpful to give out the evaluation during training or immediately following, so that RAs still remember the details that they thought were important. The farther the evaluation from the event, the more people have to rely on their memories—the impact is not fresh in their minds. For example, the interest sessions were listed by name on the evaluation, but people may not have remembered the title yet knew what the content was. A different kind of evaluation could be done later in the semester to get perspectives on what they did remember and use from training.

The training committee should consider doing an evaluation of Fall Training because it is usually longer and more intense. With both semesters’ input, the training committee should be able to make some valuable decisions about the structure and content of future training.

Prepared for: Training Committee, Department of Residence Life
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