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Create a Better Flow Through Sequencing Resident Assistant Training

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RESIDENT ASSISTANT TRAINING HAPPENS EVERY YEAR for the approximate 10,000 RAs who work on campuses across the country. These training programs can include classes, pre-service summer weeks, and ongoing training throughout the year. Following educational and training models such as CAS, assessment, Bloom's taxonomy, adventure programming, and learning/development, we posit a training sequencing for these important paraprofessionals. We used pre-determined categories of identity, skills, community development/programming, peer support, crisis intervention, synthesis, and miscellaneous to examine a selected group of pre-service training programs. The content analysis revealed time spent in categories during training. The findings showed that, collectively, trainers follow a sequence with some variation on individual campuses. We propose the Resident Assistant Sequencing Model (RASM) as a visual representation and a rationale for sequencing RA training programs.

The Resident Assistant (RA) role in higher education institutions is one of the most well-known functions on the modern campus (Akens & Novak, 2011; Porter, 1999), tracing back in some form to colonial times (Blimling, 2010; Winston & Fitch, 1993). There are roughly 10,000 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011) RAs working at U.S. institutions. According to Winston et al. (1984), residence hall administrators are most likely the first student affairs professionals to employ students as paraprofessionals. Their functions include peer support and development, planning educational and social programs, and ensuring safety within the halls. The RA role, as peer educators, contributes to the creation and maintenance of environments conducive to learning, personal, and educational development (Blimling, 2010; Newton & Ender, 2010; Winston & Fitch, 1993). This article will present a case for improving the RA pre-service training using topical sequencing (i.e., rearranging topics for a more natural flow and organization).

The RA role requires the paraprofessional to pull from a wide skill set including role model, programmer, and community builder, all while maintaining his/her course load and grade point average.

The annual process of selection, training, and supervision has evolved over the years and the more contemporary term *paraprofessional* has been adopted for some student roles within residential education programs with the term RA included here (Winston & Fitch, 1993). A paraprofessional is defined

> As a student who is selected, trained, and supervised in assuming responsibilities and performing tasks that are intended to (1) directly promote the individual personal development of his or her peers, (2) foster the creation and maintenance of environments that stimulate and support residents' personal and educational development, and/or (3) perform tasks that ensure the maintenance of secure, clean, healthy, psychologically safe, and esthetically pleasing living accommodations. (Winston & Fitch, 1993, p. 317)

The RA role requires the paraprofessional to pull from a wide skill set including role model, programmer, and community builder, all while maintaining his/her course load and grade point average (Akens & Novak, 2011; Newton & Ender, 2010; Winston & Fitch, 1993). Winston and Fitch (1993) argued there are multiple and sometimes conflicting expectations of an RA that require mature, intelligent, skillful, dedicated paraprofessionals to assume these roles. According to Blimling (2010), residence hall staff should have basic skills in cultivating student development, counseling/helping, knowledge of resources, administrative organization and time management, peer education through programming and role modeling, leadership, crisis management, and human relations. However, these weighty responsibilities could lead to burnout (Fuerhrer & McGongle, 1988). The competing demands and dynamic roles RA fulfill make it difficult to articulate if the "perfect" RA exists, or how to train/build that person (Early, 2014; Kennedy, 2009; Powell, Plyer, Dickson, & McClellan, 1969).

The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education (2012), as well as other sources on residential life (e.g., Akens & Novak, 2011; Schuh, 1996; Winston & Fitch, 1993) present more of a case for the overall residential education experience than RA training. With regard to CAS, the role of the RA is mentioned in the Human Resources section with other staffing issues/topics. Cumulatively, there are thousands of dollars, program hours, and resources to support the important first line role of these paraprofessionals. Despite the ubiquity of the RA experience, there seems to be a dearth of training models, templates, or protocols. Campuses have created unique training models (i.e., proprietary) and schedules that have common themes, skills, and topics based on the residence life literature. This article does not suggest these campuses are wrong, but it seems odd there is little attention given to this large student worker/leadership population. The modern climate of accountability, assessment (Keeling, et al., 2008; Suskie, 2009; Maki, 2010), standardization, and competencies (ACPA & NASPA, 2010) exist to connect residential education work to experiential education and may be helpful for practitioners. While residence life literature discusses the importance of RA training programs, there have been no standard templates or models presented to aid practitioners with development and implementation (Blimling, 2010; Murray, Snider, & Midkiff, 1999; Kennedy,

2009; Schuh, 1981, 1996). Literature exists with suggested training topics (Murray et al., 1999) and the timing of training (Schuh, 1981; Schuh 1996; Winston & Fitch, 1993), but connections to experiential learning are less frequent or nonexistent.

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RA Training

RA training designers must connect staff development to training curricula throughout the year, including ongoing feedback; in essence – training does not end when the residents move in (Kennedy, 2009). For some institutions, training starts with a class as a pre-requisite for hiring or during the RA selection process. The fall pre-service RA training seems to be the most common component across the country, occurring as a stand-alone program or connected with pre-requisite classes (Kennedy, 2009). RA training programs vary in the timing, depth of training topics, intensity levels, and overall content (Winston & Fitch, 1993).

Adequate training and modes of delivery addressing stress, wellness, and reducing RA role ambiguity are important to avoid burnout among RAs (Paladino, Murray, Newgent, & Gohn 2005). Helping the RA understand his or her identity within their role will foster competencies and interdependence with colleagues and supervisors, which could lead to a sense of purpose within the job role (Chickering & Reiser, 1996; Murray et al., 1999; Paladino et al., 2005). Upcraft and Pilato (1982) identified six main roles and responsibilities resident assistants perform including: providing personal assistance; overseeing groups; facilitating programming for social, educational, and recreational purposes; informing and referring students to appropriate resources; upholding institutional policies; and maintaining a safe environment conductive to studying and sleeping. Winston et al. (1984) identified seven roles: role model, peer helper, information and referral agent, socializer, leader, clerical worker, and conflict mediator. More recently, Wilson and Hirschy (2003) identified six RA duties including: student, administrator, role model, teacher, counselor, and policy upholder. In essence, it is essential for the RA to have an understanding of their identity in addition to a better understanding of the nature of the RA position and how they fit into both the department and university as a whole.

RAs often have more contact with their residents than most student affairs professionals (Jaeger & Caison, 2006) and faculty members (Winston & Fitch, 1993). Therefore, certain skill sets must be cultivated in paraprofessionals who serve in the resident assistant role because his/her actions and behaviors have significant impact on the residents' overall development (Blimling, 2010; Winston et al., 1984). Beginning with the Tuckman (1965) model for group formation (i.e., forming, storming,

norming, performing, adjourning), there is evidence RA training could contribute to teamwork and group efficacy. In many cases college student development (CSD) theories are used to create the training (Schuh, 1996; Winston & Fitch, 1993) and/or are taught within the training itself (Blimling, 2010; CAS, 2012). CSD theories contribute to the underpinnings of our work with all students and provide some basis for program development, assessment, and evaluation (Maki, 2010; Schuh & Upcraft, 1996; Suskie, 2009).

In essence, it is essential for the RA to have an understanding of their identity in addition to a better understanding of the nature of the RA position and how they fit into both the department and university as a whole.

Learning theories stress the importance of creating conducive atmospheres for learning and structures of increasing complexity over time (Bloom, 1956; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Kolb, 1984; Suskie, 2009; Zull, 2005). Kolb's learning cycle (1984) of concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, allows practitioners to identify the natural progression in complexity between training topics and learning to move in tandem over time. This is supported by brain research on the importance of the learners' sense of control over changing data into knowledge, or transformation (Zull, 2002). The scaffolding of knowledge and experience is best with a "well-proportioned foundation" (Zull, 2002, p. 45). According to adult learning theory (i.e., andragogy) an understanding of how and why something is important and how it fits into one's life/work (Knowles, et al., 2005) increases the motivation to learn, engagement, and interest (Kennedy, 2009). Bloom's (1956) taxonomy provides a structure for learning and forming related outcomes (i.e., know, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create). When tying learning outcomes to training and experiential activities, the RA is better equipped to understand the complexities of their development and complicated nature of their position.

Using assessment to demonstrate the impact and learning gains of residential programs contributes to the ongoing success and improvement of work over time (CAS, 2012; Porter, 1999). Assessment is cyclical; it starts with pre-planning and continues to post-review for implementation to improve future programs (Keeling, Wall, Underhile, & Dungy, 2008; Maki, 2010; Suskie, 2009). It is helpful to assess participants' motivation, skill level, and learning preferences early in the training (i.e., academic class, pre-service training week, and in-service) to provide valuable information to enhance learning and retention, in addition to making the training program more organic in the long run (Kennedy, 2009).

Recently, (Whitney & Early, 2011) an RA

Training Model to aid practitioners has been published. This article alters that former model because we now recognize that sequencing training categories and topics is more attuned to experiential learning and development (Murray et al., 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Richlin, 2006). Training programs are a natural extension of experiential learning to create a group-learning environment (Morzinski & Montagini, 2004; Winston & Fitch, 1993).

A Case for Sequencing

Schuh (1981) posited, "The sequence of training ...must be considered. A recurring point is that training must be sequential: Skills are built onto skills, and logic of succession must inform all training" (p. 92). Sequencing is the intentional ordering of training topics and activities that are appropriate for the respective group (Bisson, 1999). This sequencing facet is similar to the pre-requisites of the core curriculum within student's college major, or the progression from base knowledge to more complex thinking (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Sequencing topics and activities address the *how* of training related to the principles for good practice (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) within the literature. Newton and Ender (2010) presented a three-component peer educators training model (i.e., knowledge, skills, and personal integration). Their sequenced approach guides the learner from what he or she knows/needs to know for this job to specific skills of the job and the integration for self-management and self-efficacy. "The goal...is to emulate the qualities of self-awareness, personal growth and to self-manage behavior," (p. 17). This is implemented in their process-and-reflection model comprising the following stages: *What?* (Reflecting Stage), *So What?* (Transforming Stage) and *Now What?* (Action Stage).

Other sequencing models associated with student affairs work included assessment (Keeling et al, 2008; Suskie, 2009; Maki, 2010; Schuh & Upcraft, 2000), experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and learning in general (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Richlin, 2006). The use of logic modeling (an example of sequencing itself) contributes to the processes of the training, but also the initial planning, implementation, evaluation, and communication (W. K. Kellogg, 2004). Logic models describe the logical sequences beneficial to planning methods and visual organizers describe the components of a program (W. K. Kellogg, 2004). These models have also been referred to as program matrix to provide a coherent relationship between all components. Logic models provide structure for the intervention, programs and/or training to outline a system for results (Morzinski & Montagnini, 2004).

Perhaps another illustrative approach to sequencing relevant to RA training is adventure programming and ropes courses. Bisson (1999) outlined models and presented an argument for sequencing that showed how the group processed, made individual gains, and gained trust. In short, the learner was not expected to jump to the "high events" and walk across the wire 30 feet above ground without building some control, understanding, and capacity first. We suggest the experiential education of RA training is analogous with adventure training (e.g., ropes courses). For example, on a ropes course there is a progression, or sequence, of activities–from the beginning with events on the ground, or low

ropes, to the culminating events on the high elements. Adventure training has been shown to improve group cohesion and strengthen the individuals' self-confidence, self-concept, and self-efficacy. Various RA training programs have incorporated ropes courses and/or other adventure programs into their training.

METHODOLOGY

The initial work for this project began in 2000 with the impetus to improve RA pre-service training on a university campus in the Western United States. Looking for a training model as a starting point for the project revealed nothing. As previously mentioned, there was literature on suggested topics and the time of year/academic term, but very little on delivery and design (Schuh, 1981; Winston & Fitch, 1993). Combining RA literature with research on burnout, experiential learning, and training, the existing RA training topics were rearranged to follow a sequence. We revisited the model in 2012 with a current literature review that revealed similar results that no models incorporated design and delivery to pre-service training. Searches on Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Project Muse, and ProQuest produced similar results to the initial attempt. For example, a search, using the keywords "RA Training" of the housing and residential education journal for the last 10 years revealed three articles, none of which addressed training models nor sequencing. Various sources in residential education also only addressed the rationale, roles, duties, and topics for RA training, but there is no suggested model or template (Akens & Novak, 2011; Blimling, 2010; Schuh, 1981, 1996; Schuh & Upcraft, 2000; Winston & Fitch, 1993).

To respect the proprietary nature of training and the culture of each campus, we had one research question. Do RA training programs approach training with regard to sequencing topics? The sequencing of topics was determined because time (i.e., minutes) was our best unit of measure (Carley, 1997). This allowed for placement in the sequence of the agenda (Schuh, 1981) as well as the frequency of topics in training and training categories (Porter, 1999). Content analysis provides a methodology to access collective structures (Carley, 1997) and offers a means to conduct research. Therefore, investigating RA training as an experience for the learners substantiates an embedded design was appropriate to examine the predominantly qualitative data (i.e., the narrative training schedule data) and convert those topics into units of time and categories in this content analysis study (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to gain a base andralogical model of RA pre-service training from selected institutional types across the nation. The convenience sampling was based on institutions in which we had contacts. We took into consideration an intentional approach with the selection criteria and included outreach to different regions (based on the ACUHO-I regions) and institutional types (e.g., public, urban private, religious affiliation, and large selective). Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities were contacted to participate; none chose to respond/participate. Twelve institutions were contacted across the country, and the final participating schools (n=11) were determined by readability and usability of the information received.

Table 1

Descriptors of participating schools

School Type	Region	Residential Campus Size	Length of Summer Training (Days)
Public	GLACUHO	6,000	10
Private	GLACUHO	2,500	14
Private, Religious	GLACUHO	2,400	16
Private, Religious	GLACUHO	1,200	20
Public	GLACUHO	15,000	10
Private, Non Sectarian	NEACUHO	11,000	7
Private, Religious	SWACUHO	3,000	11
Private, Non Sectarian	SEAHO	3,600	7
Public	UMR-ACUHO	2,900	8
Public	MACUHO	8,900	10
Public	AIMHO	2,500	15

We coded 11 schedules for this study. For consistency, we converted all of the schedules to the number of minutes allotted to each topic, providing the basic unit of analysis (Carley, 1997). Coding included a total of 43,395 minutes (or about 723.25 hours) of programming data. To address internal validity, two different researchers coded each schedule and the third checked for consistency. In addition to the qualitative coding results, we examined basic inferential statistics among the participating schools to note if there seemed to be consistency of how various programs spend their time. A team of two researchers coded each institutional program, over three iterations of coding, to check for consistency, according to the codebook (see example in Table 2) for the predetermined categories.

Since there was no such model to use as a base, the categories presented here were created based on the literature supporting training, peer mentoring, RA roles, expectations, duties, and skills (Blimling, 2010; Murray et al., 1999; Newton & Ender, 2010; Schuh, 1981, 1996; Winston & Fitch, 1993) to decrease burnout and attrition (Feurhrer & McGongle, 1988). The categories used were: *Identity*, *Skills*, *Community Development/Programming*, *Crisis Intervention*, *Synthesis*, *Miscellaneous/Proprietary* and *Ongoing Training*. The ordering rationale highlights the importance of addressing RA *identity*, roles and self-efficacy (Blimling, 2010; Chickering & Reiser, 1996; Newton & Ender, 2010; Tuckman, 1965). The *Skills* category included topics that added to the RAs' duties, roles and expectations. Having an understanding of the RAs' roles and expectations would contribute and enhance their abilities to create *Community Development/Programming*, thereby fostering situations where

they can be seen as a leader and resource for students in *Peer Support* (i.e., counseling like skills). This understanding of the helping professions will contribute to a better understanding of how to stay calm and manage the triage component of *Crisis Intervention*. The *Synthesis* category covered topics used as culminating sessions for wrap up or connecting topics together with more cohesion. *Proprietary/ Miscellaneous* proprietary gives credence to campus specific topics or programmatic components. Finally, *Ongoing Training* is more of a component of the model recognizing that RA development does not end with pre-service training, and in-service throughout the year may help.

Table 2

Examples from codebook for various categories

Identity	Skills	Community Development	Peer Support	Crisis Intervention
Examples of RA training topics within the different categories				
What Is An RA	Time Management	Diversity	Listening Skills	Sexual Offense
Life in the fishbowl	Policy Review	Programming models	Mediation	Suicide/ Depression
Student Rights	Campus Resources	Community Development	Alcohol Usage	Alcohol/ Drug Abuse
Leadership Training	Incident Report Writing	How to program	Roommate Concerns	Active Campus Shooter
Teambuilding	Confrontation	Crossing the Line	Through Open Doors	Behind Closed Door

Table 2 (cont.)

Examples from codebook for various categories

Synthesis	Proprietary/Misc	Ongoing	Meals/Off
Examples of RA training topics within the different categories			
Wrap Up	In-Hall Time	In-service	
Tying It All Together	Free Time	Class	
In-Hall Time	School Specific	Meetings	
		One-on-One	

RESULTS

The results of the coding revealed some interesting revelations about the functions of the pre-service RA training sessions. The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility of sequencing with a small number of schools to determine the results; this information can provide a rationale for additional studies with more schools. These pre-service training schedules ranged from seven to 20 days of training and programming time. Meals (that did not indicate program or training functions), free time, and time off were excluded from the final analysis because we only looked at the training categories used in the project. As mentioned, the minute unit of measure was determined to be the best common unit of measure to analyze the schools (Carley, 1997). When looking at the topics and their resulting categories the placement in the agenda could have revealed some form of a sequence (Schuh, 1981), amount of time spent, or frequency (Porter, 1999). Looking at the all of the schools, the incremental sessions ranged between 15 to 360 minutes. The total number of sessions scheduled ranged from 28 to 72, with an average of 47.4 and a median of 45 among the sample schools.

The information presented in Table 3 reveals the information gathered for the overall sample broken down by categories to estimate how much time was spent in each category. The average minutes with respective standard deviations and median number of minutes is indicated for the totals and all seven categories. The hours are listed for another point of reference. The rankings indicate which of the categories seem to have the most weight in the RA training schedules from the greatest amount of time to the least. The range identifies the percentage of time spent within the categories, from the sample schools. For example, examining the minimum amounts of time allotted to some categories reveals some schools seemed to spend 0.0% of their time in the categories of *Crisis Intervention* and *Synthesis*. With regard to the maximum amount of time it seems that almost half of training time for schools in this sample is given to *Skills* (45.8%). The split half section is an analysis using the midpoint for each training schedule and calculating the inclusion of each category in the first half of their training compared to the second half. The split half was analyzed to see if the earlier categories in the model seemed to fall in the first half of training for most schools, while the latter categories seemed to fall in the second half of training. The frequency of programs seems to indicate that they do in general.

The beginning session and the ending session for each of the schedules were also analyzed to determine the opening and closing sequences of the sample schools. Seven of the institutions began with sessions on *Identity*, two started with *Community Development/Programming* and the last with an overview (coded as *Synthesis*) followed by a second session on *Community Development/Programming*. The last session of the training schedules were *Miscellaneous* (*n*=6), *Synthesis* (*n*=2), *Community Development/Programming* (*n*=1), *Crisis Intervention* (*n*=1), and *Identity* (*n*=1; this school also started with identity).

Table 3

RA Training Schedule Data

	Total	Identity	Skills	Community Dev/Prgmg	Peer Support	Crisis Intervention	Synthesis	Misc Proprietary
Averages								
Mean	3945	737.3	836.8	651.4	377.3	214.1	134.5	887.6
Std Dev	1612.6	355	271.4	603.3	254.7	137.2	155.9	636.8
Median		750	660	615	465	240	90	930
Hours	65.8	12.3	13.9	10.9	6.3	3.6	2.2	14.8
Rankings		3	2	4	5	6	7	1
Ranges								
% Min		12.5	11	5.4	2.1	0	0	12.5
% Max		35.8	45.8	38.5	18.9	16.7	15.1	35.8
Split Half								
First Half		11	10	11	7	5	4	7
Second Half		8	11	9	10	7	6	9

DISCUSSION

The cumulative results of the 11 schools indicated there seems to be a sequencing aspect within RA pre-service training for these 11 institutions. While the data for the individual schools are not provided here, suffice it to say that a logical sequence did not seem apparent. Since the categories were created based on the literature, it was interesting to see this coding process and the previously mentioned order are aligned. Slightly more time was given to skills than identity; this seems to fit the RA role and the need to understand their duties. These findings do not negate our assumptions that helping the new (and returning) RA understand their personal- and community-specific identities are an important first step (Paladino, et al., 2005; Winston & Fitch, 1993). The miscellaneous category was the largest amount of time allotted in the sample schools. This seems to indicate the proprietary or campus-specific nature of RA training schedules. An example of school specific topics include in-hall training that would address the culture of specific buildings. However, there seems to be little consistency within the individual schedules among the participating institutions. These scheduling differences may be the result of tradition, meaning that is the way they have always done it, and/or coordinating the schedules of many departments on campus and logistical difficulties in general.

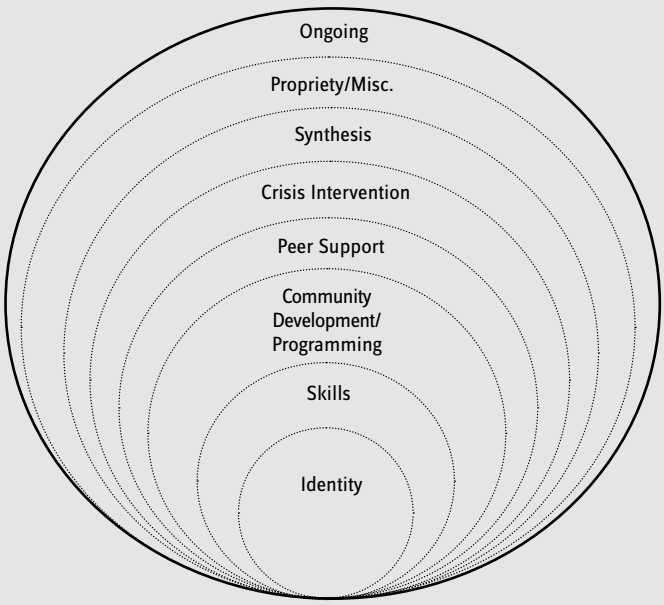
Based on the literature and the results of this analysis, we present a suggested sequence for RA training (i.e., the coding categories) in Figure 1. We posit that utilizing the Resident Assistant Sequencing Model may enhance the intentionality of RA training connecting the succession of categories/topics that connects the literature (Blimling, 2010; Schuh, 1981; Winston & Fitch, 1993). The RASM has *Identity* as the core or base that supports the RA understanding of their identities, self-efficacies, and position. The *Skills* category relates directly to the day-to-day RA work during the academic year. *Community Development/ Programming* is generally an institutional requirement. It includes RA responsibilities such as engaging the students within the hall and campus community primarily through programs and programming functions. *Peer Support* is the culmination of skills needed by an RA to interact with residents in situations requiring compassion and empathy while understanding they need to maintain distance and document violations of rules, regulations, and community standards. This role can be difficult for an RA working from a peer standpoint and in some cases may be younger (e.g., age, class standing) than their residents. The next order of *Crisis Intervention* builds on peer support for the RA to remain calm and collected during an emergency or crisis situation. It is important to maintain confidentiality, respect for the resident/situation while controlling the environment and being able to document as appropriate for sanctioning or legal purposes. This is a higher-level function of the RA role (Blimling, 2010) and needs to be communicated as such, but the categories and stages before this will all support this important aspect of their jobs (Blimling, 2010; Paladino et al., 2005; Porter, 1999; Schuh, 1996; Winston & Fitch, 1993).

In essence, the RA functions as a first responder and triage while waiting for the Resident Director and other senior administrators and emergency services. The *Synthesis* stage helps to bring all of the stages together to complete the picture of the important role and function of the RA. Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) synthesis helps practitioners actualize the textbook understanding into a practical sense of duty. *Miscellaneous* is primarily for those topics and areas that are campus specific and in some cases ancillary to the function of the RA. *Ongoing* is a stage that takes into account the ongoing development of all professionals (and paraprofessionals). This stage would include weekly one-on-one meetings, hall staff meetings, campus/divisional in-service training, and winter or mid-term training programs.

To provide context and a visual element the categories are presented in a model (see Figure 1). The shape of the model is an expanding circle beginning with the core. The model is also indicative of the type of transformational learning occurring during the growth and development of each RA in the process. The dotted lines between the stages indicate the model is a movement from one to the other; however one does not leave one stage to move into the next. There is a cumulative effect helping to construct and expand the learning process of the paraprofessional who has joined the student affairs field (Akens & Novak, 2011; Blimling, 2010; Fuerhrer & McGongle, 1988; Kolb, 1984; Newton & Ender, 2010; Winston & Fitch, 1993). The dotted lines are a visual representation indicating there is movement, but

Figure 1

RA Sequencing Model (RASM)



we know from challenge and support (Sanford, 1962) this is dependent on the timing and readiness of the individual.

Implications and Limitations

The implications of this research for residential education and the field of student affairs are associated with aligning our best practices with standard practices. This sequencing model builds on the importance of sequencing RA training (Schuh, 1981). By suggesting a structure based on peer educator training (Newton & Ender, 2010), logic models (Kellogg, 2004; Morzinski & Montagini, 2004) and the methods and importance of safety and learning from adventure programming (Bisson, 1999; Murray et al., 1999), the experiential learning within RA training may help with development (Keeling et al., 2008; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005) of these important paraprofessionals. The limitations of this exploratory study would be the number of schools participating and the literature-based categories. Another limitation is the focus on one component of training (i.e., summer training), particularly for institutions with more comprehensive training programs. Future research could include a similar study with a greater number of institutions, or seg-

mentation into institutional types/size/and delivery methods. The ranges within the specific categories would merit more analysis and future research to determine if an optimum number of hours could be determined.

With little research on common practices within Housing and Residence Life Departments nationally, it is hard to determine best practices. Creating training that allows for reflection and connections to tangible outcomes increases the skills being utilized in the position, which in turn creates a more impactful experience for the staff members and the residents (Kennedy, 2009; Newton & Ender, 2010; Schuh, 1981). There are a multitude of factors impacting how paraprofessional staff training is implemented on various campuses. The area of RA training seems to have some consistency in content. Exploring the delivery approach could contribute to learning and development, as well as how we assess the paraprofessional program. Intentional training programs must provide the RA with capacities to serve as effective paraprofessionals for their own professional development and for the good of the campus residential program.

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Discussion Questions

1, What have you learned in this article that could be applied to training at your institution? Specifically, how might the concept of sequencing be used in deciding what training can/should be conducted while staff is at work?

2. According to this study, a lot of time is dedicated to the category referred to as "Miscellaneous/Proprietary" (i.e. in-hall time and topics specific to the particular institution). How might this portion of the training program be used to support the application of the knowledge that was acquired during the training program?

3. Using the categories identified by the authors as presented in Table 2, conduct an audit of the specific training sessions and time allocations of your RA training program. What does it tell you about the nature of the RA role? Do the training allocations align with the position description and the expected job performance of your RAs? What does it tell you about department priorities/values?

4. The authors of this article suggest that the sequencing of RA training creates a more intentional and thus, effective, training intervention. Furthermore, they make a case for focusing on RA identity as the first topic in training. Given what you know about the current generation of students (Millennials), do you agree with this finding? Why or why not?