
Residence Life Professional Staff Development Program

The Residence Life Professional Development Program will include the following components:

1. Competency Based Model
2. Year to Year Involvement Expectations
3. Self-Reflection/Assessment
4. The Creation of Professional Goals
5. Training as well as External Training
6. Mentors
7. Functional Areas
8. Evaluation

1. Competency Based Model

Competence is a 'state' of attainment or achievement and is about where a person is now not where they might be in the future.ⁱⁱ

Competencies relate to *how* knowledge and skills are used/applied in performance, of particular job requirements. Assessing knowledge and skills is quite different from the assessing competencies:

- Knowledge and skills are job or occupation specific.
- Competencies are generic in that they apply across all occupations and jobs. The number of competencies is finite.
- Competencies determine whether or not people will acquire new job knowledge and skills and how they will use that knowledge and skills to enhance their performance.
- People demonstrate competence by applying their knowledge and skills in a goal-directed manner within a work setting.

In its pilot year, the Residence Life Competency Program is a framework for staff's professional development. It is our intention that each staff member will work toward the competency areas outlined below. In order to gain knowledge and skills vital to success in our department and in our work with students.

The following sets of competencies have been designed based on a model from the University of Florida^{iiiiv}. Focus on competency areas will vary from year to year, but such work will continue all year. These areas are to be continuously worked on each year. Some areas will have a stronger or lesser focus from year to year.

Years One & Two

1. Administrative
2. Crisis Management
3. Diversity
4. Foundational
5. Supervision
6. Interpersonal Skills
7. Residential Education
8. Professional Development

Years Three to Five

1. Leadership
 2. Conceptual/Creative
 3. Diversity
 4. Strategic Thinking/Planning
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Years One & Two

Administrative

Competencies pertaining to the day-to-day operations and functioning of a residence life office.

- ✓ **Administration** – Utilize effective communication, planning scheduling, and organizational skills as they relate to position responsibilities.
- ✓ **Customer Service** – Be aware of housing and university services delivered to students, parents, faculty, and staff. Maintain a customer service approach to working with all “customers.”
- ✓ **Decision Making** – Make wise, timely decisions; understand how decisions directly and indirectly affect other people and departments.
- ✓ **Facility Management** – Be knowledgeable about the facilities in your area. Be aware of each buildings day to day condition in regards to maintenance, environmental services, and safety. Understand the process for addressing issues (TMS System, etc.). Understand the how facility layout impacts programming, student health and success, and campus culture.
- ✓ **Problem Solving** – Define a problem; determine the cause of the problem; identify, prioritize and select alternatives for a solution; discuss with supervisor; and implement a solution.
- ✓ **Technology** – Effectively utilize online applications and computer programs to perform job functions and maintain communication with students and staff (ex: Blackboard, Ontrack, Datatel, Outlook, Microsoft Office, etc).
- ✓ **Budget Development and Resource Allocation** – Understand and manage basic components of an area budget and effectively manage resources for those components.

Crisis Management

Effectively recognize and respond to critical situations as needed as a member of the Residence Life staff and AOC rotation.

- ✓ **Counseling Skills** – Listen to personal and/or professional concerns; act as a referral agent to appropriate resources.
- ✓ **Protocol** – Understand and follow University policies and protocol.

Diversity

- ✓ **Awareness** – Understand the unique needs of and be an advocate for diverse groups of students and personnel.
- ✓ **Programming** – Articulate to various constituents the benefits of residence hall programs, activities, and communities in residence halls. Implement and provide resources for groups and organizations that support community and student development. On occasion, attend meetings of multicultural groups.
- ✓ **Staff Selection** - Work to increase awareness of the leadership opportunities of the student staff position, thus increasing the applications for staff selection.

Foundation

- ✓ **Millenials** – Be aware of and recognize current, changing, and diverse characteristics, demographics, and needs of college students at Elon University, particularly residential students.
- ✓ **Ethics** – Internalize and balance a professional set of ethics (ex: ACUHO-I standards). Establish a culture that incorporates, encourages, and recognizes ethical action throughout the department and division.
- ✓ **Mission, Visions, and Goals** – understand the institutional and departmental missions and effectively interpret their messages to various constituents (i.e., students, staff, parents, colleagues, etc.). Be knowledgeable regarding departmental goals and your role in goal completion. Assess effectiveness of a goal or program and understand if/how it met the needs it was intended to address.

- ✓ **Knowledge of Student Affairs** – Understand the field of student affairs. Understand the specialized functions of student affairs at Elon and how all parts of the division operate, interact, and affect one another. Know how to utilize resources to obtain the best results for students and the institution.
- ✓ **Student Development Theory** – Understand and be able to articulate basic student development theories and how to apply them to residential students and student leaders.

Interpersonal Skills

- ✓ **Conflict Management** – Recognize and manage conflict effectively among staff, students, colleagues, etc. Intervene when necessary to promote compromise and/or resolution.
- ✓ **Cooperation & Collaboration** – Work with all levels of staff, students, and colleagues to achieve a common goal.
- ✓ **Interpersonal Communication** – Relate to others on a one-to-one basis. Effectively utilize oral and written communication.
- ✓ **Teambuilding** – Recognize and evaluate group dynamics. Observe and understand the interactions among diverse members of the team. Implement strategies to develop the team into an effective functional unit. Coordinate teambuilding efforts during training.
- ✓ **Communication** – Be clear, direct, and honest; know your audience and how best to reach them.

Professional Development

- ✓ **Public Speaking/Presenting** – Convey thoughts, ideas, and practices to a variety of audiences on behalf of the department. Seek out opportunities to do so.
- ✓ **Assess and Enhance** – Continually assess and enhance professional skills and knowledge through conferences, workshops, meetings, etc.

Residence Education

Competencies which foster student development and learning.

- ✓ **Advise Individuals** – Serve as a consultant, mentor, and/or role model to students, staff and colleagues.
- ✓ **Advise Groups** - Serve as a consultant, mentor, and/or role model to students, staff and colleagues.
- ✓ **Assessment of Student Needs and Interests** – Understand how to determine student needs and interests through formal and informal assessment measures. Work with staff to develop and implement a plan to address needs and interests, most specifically as it pertains to training and programming.
- ✓ **Community Development** – Understand and articulate the role of community in a residence hall setting and how to promote a positive community environment.
- ✓ **Programming** – Articulate to various constituents the benefits of curricular and co-curricular programs, activities, and communities in residence halls. Implement and provide resources for programs that support community and student development.
- ✓ **Behavior Education** – Use current principles of students' rights and responsibilities as well as the Elon Student Handbook to maintain and monitor the judicial system. Use a developmental approach, as opposed to a punitive approach when determining sanctions. Remember to always address the behavior not the student.
- ✓ **Recognition** – Provide support, inspiration, and motivation for staff and students.

Supervision

- ✓ **Select** – Understand and be knowledgeable of selection policies and procedures. Maintain a qualified staff. Assist with the procedures for student staff selection.
- ✓ **Train** – Provide resources for training and development for student staff to perform effectively and to their highest potential.
- ✓ **Supervision** – Provide staff with appropriate direction and coaching.

- ✓ **Change Management** – Assist staff in creating a readiness for change as necessary, while maintaining stability within the department.
 - ✓ **Evaluate** – Provide staff with informal and formal appraisal of their performance. Be aware of best practices for providing constructive feedback.
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Years Three to Five

Leadership

- ✓ **Personal Characteristics** – Possess personal characteristics to complement knowledge, skills, and abilities related to job roles and responsibilities. These include traits such as compassion, ability to maintain balance, confidence, sense of humor, patience, serving as a role model, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, courage, humility, risk taking, and wisdom.
- ✓ **Represent Student Concerns** – Understand and interpret student concerns, needs, and goals to various constituents who have a vested interest in the institution. Act as a liaison.
- ✓ **Teaching/Instruction** – Impart your own knowledge on a subject to others.
- ✓ **Understanding and Application of Various Leadership Styles** – Utilize appropriate leadership styles to most effectively lead your staff and work with staff at all levels.
- ✓ **Organization/Management Theory** – Understand the basis and method by which a leader manages an organization.
- ✓ **Organizational Culture** – Create an environment where staff and students are valued and empowered to succeed.
- ✓ **Recognizing and Evaluating Group Dynamics** – Observe and understand the interactions among diverse members of a group/team/staff.

Conceptual/Creative

- ✓ **Conducting Independent Research** – Assess need for research, obtain and analyze data, report results, and implement changes or enhancements as necessary.
- ✓ **Enrollment Management** – Understand how institutional enrollment policies affect residence hall occupancy.
- ✓ **Foundations of Higher Education** – Be able to articulate historical, philosophical, social, and cultural aspects of higher education.
- ✓ **Global Awareness** – Maintain awareness of current events – local, regional, national, global. Recognize, articulate, and respond to potential effects on students and staff.
- ✓ **Knowledge of Student Affairs Functions** – Understand the student affairs profession. Be highly knowledgeable of specialized functions of student affairs on campus and how all parts of the organization operate, interact, and affect one another. Know how to utilize these resources to obtain best results for students and the institution.
- ✓ **Legal Issues** – Be cognizant of the laws pertaining to higher education (i.e., FERPA, ADA, tort liability, landlord-tenant, parental notification, etc.) and know when to seek legal assistance.
- ✓ **Program Evaluation** – Assess effectiveness of a program and understand if/how it meets the needs of the personnel it was intended to address.
- ✓ **Construction and Renovation** – Understand and manage the processes, techniques, and personnel related to building and altering physical facilities.

Diversity

- ✓ **Bennet's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity** - Be familiar with DMIS and be able to communicate/teach the theory to other professionals
- ✓ **Interpret DMIS** - Be able to use the DMIS to interpret student behavior and identify developmental activities/programs/conversations to progress students and self along the DMIS continuum.
- ✓ **Multiple Perspectives** - Be able to understand multiple perspectives and alternate cultural worldviews
- ✓ Be able to support and challenge students as they develop intercultural competence

Strategic Thinking/Planning

- ✓ **Political Astuteness** – Recognize and analyze political processes in higher education. Navigate campus politics. Identify stakeholders and understand their priorities. Understand the influence of local, state, and national politics on the institution. Lobby for organization as necessary.
- ✓ **Networking** – Build and maintain essential relationships with a variety of people (ex: faculty, staff, colleagues, administrators, parents, students, executive staff, etc.) and represent departmental interests.
- ✓ **Long Range Planning** – Set goals to support the vision of the operation (i.e., 5-10 years)
- ✓ **Short Range Planning** – Set semester/quarterly and annual goals for operation (ie., 6 months to 1 year)

Professional Development

- ✓ **Academic Work** – Engage in academic work, writing, studying, reading, and working toward the advancement of new approaches in housing, student affairs, and higher education.
- ✓ **Familiarity with Current Issues in Literature** – Stay informed of current issues and trends featured in the professional literature, pertaining to residence life and housing, student affairs, and higher education.

2. Year to Year Involvement Expectations

Year One

Involvement Expectations:

Serve on a divisional committee/taskforce as requested
Identify a Residence Life Assistant Director for a mentor

Negotiable (1-2):

Attend a state or regional conference
Attend North Carolina Drive-In Conference
Attend one-two professional development workshops or reading seminars sponsored by the division

Year Two

Involvement Expectations:

Read two professional development books or articles
Attend two professional development workshops sponsored by the division

Negotiable (2-3):

Attend a state or regional conference
Teach Elon 101
Present at a regional or state conference
Mentor another Assistant Director
Advise a student organization

Year Three to Five

Involvement Expectations:

Serve on at least two Residence Life functional areas
Serve on a divisional committee/taskforce as requested
Read two professional development books
Write an article

Negotiable (2-3):

Serve on NCHO or SEAHO
Develop a new initiative for Residence Life
Attend and present at a state, regional, or national conference

3. Self Reflection/Assessment

Review the competency list then complete the *Skill Set & Behavior Assessment* in order to determine competency areas of focus for the year. Next, rate the degree of importance you place on each area. The idea is to work first on those areas which are important and need higher competence.

4. Professional Development Goals

Work with your supervisor to develop a set of five annual goals. Your goals should reflect how you will gain greater competence in areas you have identified as needing improvement. Goals should be specific and measurable, using the SMART test:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Realistic

T = Timely

Once the goals are written, submit them to your supervisor and check in periodically throughout the year on your progress.

5. Training

Staff member's initial training will be done in the first month after they begin working. Training and development sessions will be offered in a variety of formats including presentations, online courses or webinars, reading assignments, discussion groups and case studies. Further training can also happen through the individual supervisory meetings and bi-annual retreats.

External training involves the use of individuals allotted professional development money. This money is provided through the division and staff members receive a fixed amount for a two-year period. In conjunction with his/her supervisor, staff members may use his/her professional development money in a variety of ways in order to accomplish goals listed on the professional development plan.

Examples of ways to use funds: attending a conference, webinar, or 1-day workshop.

6. Mentors

The mentor program is designed to provide a smooth transition through personal orientation to the community, department, and their residential area. Mentors are responsible for the passing on departmental values and beliefs.

One such value is our commitment to collaborative relationships within our department and division. A mentoring program is a natural tool to accomplish these purposes.

The Role of the Mentee is to:

- Accept and avail oneself to the support that is being provided by the mentor.
 - Initiate contact with the mentor as needed – the relationship will work both ways.
 - Maintain regular contact, even if just to confirm that everything is okay.
 - Take advantage of the advice, experience and growth opportunities provided by the mentor.
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7. Functional Areas

Residence Life has 6 functional areas used to further our mission and goals, create staff development opportunities, and provide professional development education to our staff. Assistant Directors are assigned to functional areas by the Lead Team based on departmental need and consideration of competencies that individual staff members are attempting to develop.

The functional areas are:

1. Student Staff Recruitment
2. Student Staff Selection
3. Resident Student Association (RSA) Advising
4. Student Training (including on-going student training)
5. National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH)

8. Evaluation

As with all tasks, projects, and process it is important to assess ones experience/success and provide feedback. Professional staff appraisals should include information on goal progress and staff should assess their own end of the year success in order to work with their supervisor to determine goals for the upcoming year.

ⁱ Bonnie Solt Prunty; Creating a Comprehensive Professional Development Program,
http://www.reslife.net/html/training_0109b.html

ⁱⁱ ACPA Competencies

ⁱⁱⁱ University of Florida, <http://gastaff.housing.ufl.edu/rlegrad/competency.php>

^{iv} Dunkel, Grimm, Schreiber, National Housing Training Institute Professional Competencies, 1991

^v Diane Porter, Competencies of Senior College Housing Officers in the United States, 2005