

Learning CommUNITies Update

August 2011 - October 2011

Department of Residence
University of Northern Iowa



Resident assistants (RAs) are catalysts for student learning in the residence halls. Seven of UNI's 90 RAs are pictured here at a UNI Homecoming Event that welcomed back UNI alumni who were also RAs: (l-r) Patrick Luensmann, Audrey Smith, Abbey Roth, Angelica Posada, Annie Stevens, Theresa Luensmann and Alycia West.

Introduction

Facilitating on-campus student learning—in all dimensions of residents' lives—is a primary goal of UNI's department of residence. Resident assistants (RAs) are key catalysts for that learning. They challenge and support their residents' learning by (a) communicating and enforcing community standards; (b) responding to requests for personal and academic assistance; and (c) proactively engaging residents in learning experiences.

The five areas of learning engagement derive from the Residence Life Mission: "Develop safe, inclusive living environments where students engage in campus life contribute to community and succeed academically."

It is these areas to which 90 RAs devote time, energy and resources each month, in pursuit of higher levels of learning and success for their residents.

October 2011

During October UNI RAs identified the following numbers of residents for whom they were catalysts for learning:

Learning Focus

Academics ("do well in classes and on career path")

Engagement ("utilize campus resources: events and people")

Inclusiveness ("appreciate individual/cultural differences")

Contributions ("leading and volunteering in organizations/community")

Safety ("protect themselves, their friends and their stuff")

Number of Residents

1313

1407

1306

372

1257

August-September 2011

Research* indicates that the first six weeks are crucial to new students' engagement in campus life and ultimate success. Because of the importance of this time in students' lives, it is referred to as the "Super Six Weeks."

During the first six weeks of Fall 2011 RAs reached out to 4300 residents in numerous ways.

Examples of "Super Six Weeks" outreach by RAs:

- Hosted weekly "house" dinners
- Rallied residents to attend in-hall and all-campus Welcome Week activities
- Recruited and equipped over 200 residents for residence life leadership roles
- Led creation of 90 house agreements
- Facilitated over 2,000 roommate agreement appointments
- Promoted attendance at Financial Aid's "Live Like a Student" money management program series
- Facilitated fire safety drills and fire safety education
- Coordinated "I Protect" personal safety door hanger programs
- Engaged 86% of freshmen in the UNI MAP-Works survey program
- Collaborated with the Peer Advisor In Residence (PAIR) to engage over 600 residents in academic success programs

*<http://hakatai.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/fsd/c2006/docs/rethinkfirstyearcollege.pdf>

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