



RESIDENCE LIFE STRATEGIC PLAN (One Year Cycle) 2008 – 2009

MISSION: Residence Life provides a safe, comfortable, secure and nurturing living-learning environment that is conducive to students' academic pursuits and personal growth while fostering a sense of community, civic responsibility and an appreciation of diversity.

VISION: Residence Life creates the highest quality living-learning environments, programs and services to challenge and support Penn State students as they become active and responsible members within their communities.

TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- In the past year alone there was a 28% increase in the number of cases and amount of staff time spent handling emotional and/or psychological incidents. The amount of time responding to these crises makes it difficult for staff to focus on other initiatives.
- Residence hall safety and security concerns are heightened since Virginia Tech and we are expected to play an even larger role in the protection of students. This comes not only with financial implications but with an increase in staff time spent on these issues as well.
- We are finding ourselves spending significant time in emergency planning and training including Red Cross shelter training, emergency plan activation exercises, and table top training activities (more than 20 hours in the last year alone).
- Parent involvement and interactions have changed. Parents are getting involved at the onset of a conflict or incident rather than in the aftermath.
- While our alcohol violations were significantly decreased (63.24%) this last year, alcohol abuse still continues to negatively impact the educational experience.
- Technology is continuing to change on a daily basis. We are spending more time learning how to better utilize technology to meet and engage students. This creates a challenge of figuring out how to best utilize our IT support in order to effectively meet the changing student needs and expectations. The cost of new technology is also a budgetary consideration.
- Sustainable living is an important issue. We have a responsibility to educate students on these issues.

- There has been an increased difficulty in recruiting exceptional mid-level professionals – especially at the campuses outside of University Park. Current starting salaries for these positions are not competitive in today’s marketplace.
- Students’ understanding of workplace expectations and overall comfort in the workplace environment has decreased which has negatively impacted our ability to recruit resident assistants and our residence hall security recruitment. This, coupled with the minimum wage increase in the last year, creates a need to continue to assess the para-professional compensation package.
- The first year class size continues to fluctuate from year to year making it difficult to plan both from a financial and programmatic perspective.

2008-09 UNIT GOAL STATEMENTS

Goal 1: Continue to enhance the out-of-classroom experience by creating residential curriculum and desired outcomes for our living-learning initiatives.

1. Develop a new RA/CA programming model that is based on a residential curriculum.
2. Conduct a thorough review of the current special living options program and develop an implementation plan for any changes that arise from the review.
3. In collaboration with Alcohol Edu, use the alcohol residential curriculum model to educate students on high risk drinking.
4. Create learning outcomes for all of our first-year living options, special living options and sophomore year experience living option.
5. Rewrite and implement Residence Life’s First Year Strategic Plan to support the University’s first year outcomes.

Strategic Indicators:

- › The number of programs and community builders that are directly related to the residential curriculum model should increase by ten percent.
- › The number of students who know the alcohol policy in community standards meetings should be at 80% or higher.
- › Information gathered by the RA’s through RA chats will show that 80% of students learned something about high risk alcohol consumption from Alcohol Edu and/or the alcohol residential curriculum model programs and activities.

Goal 2: To build communities that promote, enhance and encourage dialogue around the issues of respect, responsibility and diversity.

1. Incorporate Residence Life’s diversity theme, “Paws. Reflect. Show some respect” into our programming initiatives and living environments.

2. Promote dialogue and inclusivity in our residential communities by enhancing the current Prejudice Free Zone initiative with more interactive and discussion oriented group activities.
3. Maintain collaborations with the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.
4. Develop house meeting lesson plans for the RAs/CAs that articulate specific goals and outcomes for each meeting.
5. Give staff the training and tools to effectively meet the needs of students in crisis and conflict.
6. Collaborate with various faculty and Student Affairs staff to re-develop a Social Justice interest house.
7. Offer additional programming geared specifically towards our international students, graduate students, and family housing students and families.

Strategic Indicators:

- › There should be a significant increase in the number of programs in EPR that are dealing specifically with international students, graduate students, and family housing students and/or their families.
- › The Social Justice House curriculum will be developed and an implementation plan in place for Fall 2009.
- › The number of programs in collaboration with the Paul Robeson Cultural Center will remain the same or increase from past years.

Goal 3: To prepare residential students to be exceptional, ethical leaders, responsible community members and citizens.

1. Develop a residential curriculum model for educating students about their role in maintaining a safe and secure environment.
2. Encourage students to live in a sustainable community by communicating opportunities for involvement in the energy saving and recycling programs.
3. Develop student leadership opportunities in all first year buildings.
4. Advise, support and mentor residence hall student leaders through their involvement in area government, Association of Residence Hall Students (ARHS) and National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH).
5. Inform students of the Housing and Residence Life emergency preparation plan and of their role in emergency situations.

6. Work with Career Services to pilot the on-line career development module with incoming summer students and in some of our first year environments in the fall.

Strategic Indicators:

- › There will be an increase of first year students involved in residence hall leadership roles.
- › There will be a 5% decrease in safety and security related community standards violations.
- › Recycling in the halls will show a measurable increase.

Goal 4: Provide support and resources for residential initiatives at the Commonwealth campuses.

1. Provide specific opportunities for the residential campuses to dialog on best practices on a variety of topics and issues.
2. Create a web-based resource page for all Residence Life staff at University Park and the residential campuses.
3. Provide support to the residential campuses on their residential curriculum development and assessment initiatives.
4. Provide additional opportunities for system-wide training at all levels of staff including drive-in conferences, video-conferences, phone consultations and campus visits, as necessary.
5. Review our current funding model for each residential location to ensure students are getting a comparable experience.
6. Collaborate with CCSG on issues that impact the residential campuses.

Strategic Indicators:

- › There will be an increase in the number of opportunities for training, dialogue, and sharing of best practices between all levels of campus staff.
- › Based on a review of the current funding model, some campus funding models may be changed to better reflect an equitable experience.
- › Campus Residence Life staff will report a high degree of satisfaction with the level of support provided to them by University Park staff.

Goal 5: To think critically about the needs and expectations of our students and involve them in decisions which affect their residential experience.

1. Include students on search committees, community councils and advisory boards to ensure that their voices are being given consideration.

2. Create sorority community councils in East, Pollock and South with the goal of increasing communication between Residence Life and Greek Life.
3. Use technology (i.e. Angel; chat rooms; podcasting) to more effectively communicate with students.

Strategic Indicators:

- › Benchmark and collaborate with other residence life programs to ensure Penn State is offering a high quality experience.
- › Assess student satisfaction with their residential experience and make changes to the Residence Life program to improve the student living experience.
- › Provide financial resources to install wireless in all of our living environments by Spring of 2011 and create a technology studio where staff and students can collaborate on web-based programming and initiatives.

Goal 6: Recruit, retain and train a highly motivated and diverse para-professional and professional staff with the skills and abilities to challenge and support students in their educational pursuits and personal development.

1. Create a comprehensive coordinator development plan based on the four year term limit and offer coordinators experiences that will increase their marketability and interest in being promoted to mid-level positions in Residence Life.
2. Collaborate with our Housing colleagues to improve the live-in professional staff apartments across the system.
3. Encourage undergraduate students to enter the field by involving them in MACUHO, NRHH and other professional opportunities.

Strategic Indicators:

- › Benchmark with other institutions on para-professional and professional staff compensation packages in order to remain competitive in the current market place.
- › Renovate at least one staff apartment per year.