Community Development Blueprint, 2006-2007

Overview
The purpose of the community development blueprint is to shift the focus of the Office of Residence Life from traditional programming to purposeful community development within the residence halls. Our students and staff need to view community development as an opportunity for fostering student learning, growth, and interaction. What outcomes do we want our residents to have achieved after living in our residence halls?

The Community Development Blueprint focuses on five outcomes:
1. Knowledge of Individual and Community Needs
2. Focus on Academics and Expanding Knowledge
3. Personal Wellness and Health Choices
4. Attending to the Well-Being of Others through Social Action
5. Commitment to Career Preparation

During the first four weeks of the Fall 2006 semester, Resident Assistants (RAs) will focus on getting to know their residents. It is important to establish meaningful connections and relationships with residents in order to develop mutual respect, trust, and to build a strong community. RAs will be given an assessment tool to determine and assess the culture and needs of their community. By completing the tool and discussing it with their Hall Coordinator (HC), an RA will have a better understanding of how to successfully develop initiatives that foster all five of the outcomes within their residence hall communities. The focus is on how an initiative or interaction improves and benefits the community overall and fosters the outcomes, rather than how many people attended the event.

The Community Development Blueprint is designed to empower RAs to take personal initiative as they work on developing their community. RAs will work with their supervisor to develop an action plan to successfully foster each of the five outcomes, personally challenge the RA, and advance the mission and goals of University Housing, Office of Residence Life. The RA and their supervisor will determine the best method for communicating progress and reflecting on the process of building community, either through weekly reports, interaction logs, journals, or by other means. The importance of communicating progress lies in the effectiveness of the communication, not the method. The process of reflection is important not only as a means of reporting the establishment and growth of strong, inclusive communities, but is also significant for each RA to examine their own learning and growth with the community building process.

Tracking Community Interactions
Minimally, the supervisor is responsible for tracking the following information for each community development activity/event:
1. event name and brief description
2. event coordinator name(s)
3. event date
4. event attendance
5. event cost (if any)
6. focused outcome(s)
7. funding source(s)
8. diversity-related event

This information will need to be reported for each interaction that builds community at most 7 days after the initiative or interaction occurs.
Community Development Blueprint: The Fine Details

The purpose of the blueprint is to empower RAs to create strong, inclusive communities within the residence halls. This blueprint provides each RA the initiative, with the guidance of their supervisor, to develop and tailor an action plan to build community that in turn fosters each of the five outcomes.

Implementing the Blueprint

- During the first four weeks (August 20-September 15), the RA’s primary responsibility is to engage in meaningful interactions with each resident, fostering interactions between residents, and building an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in their community.
- By Wednesday, September 6, complete and give to supervisor a copy of your community floor assessment tool.
- By Friday, September 15, devise and discuss with supervisor an action plan to develop the first outcome, Knowledge of Individual & Community Needs.
- While continuing to build upon the first outcome, the RA will need to develop an action plan to integrate the development of the second outcome, Focus on Academics & Expanding Knowledge, by Friday, October 13.
- The RA will begin incorporating the third outcome, Personal Wellness and Health Choices, with an action plan devised by Friday, November 17 into their community building initiatives.
- By Friday, February 16, the RA will design an action plan to address the development of the fourth outcome, Attending to the Wellbeing of Others through Social Action.
- The RA will address the development of the fifth outcome, Commitment to Career Preparation, within their residence hall community by integrating an action plan by Friday March 16.

**Note:** While deadlines have been provided as to when to integrate each outcome’s action plan into the community building blueprint, it is more important to be responsive to individual community needs. The blueprint may need to be modified to address outcomes earlier than prescribed. Remember while new outcomes are integrated throughout the year, RAs must continue to address needs of outcomes already implemented in the community.

Departmental Expectations:

- RAs should make a point to interact with each and every resident at least once a week. Meaningful interactions (i.e. asking about classes, roommates, campus participation) should occur with each resident minimally once a month.
- Support all Welcome Week headline events (fall semester only)
  - Each residence hall will be responsible for assigning RAs (individuals or groups) to take students to each of the Welcome Week headline events. A list of the headline events will be provided.
- Strong support and participation in The Cup (Hall Olympics) and other campus-wide initiatives planned by the Residence Life Programs staff to address important issues in first-year students’ transitions.
- Participation with majority of floor members in attendance at one designated sexual assault/healthy relationships event during the month of October.
- Each neighborhood will be responsible for assigning RAs (typically in teams) to sponsor a late night event every weekend – except on a Night Games weekend. An event shall be classified as ‘late-night’ if it is held on Thursday, Friday or Saturday, and begins after 9:00 p.m. (A late-night event may begin before 9:00 p.m. provided at least 75% of the event goes beyond 9:00 p.m.)
- At least one OTM (Of the Month) Nomination each semester.
Learning Goals

- Take initiative to develop community between self and residents and between residents.
- Effectively communicate with supervisor about the progress and development of the community.
- Actively reflect on how an initiative or interaction fostered the development of a community and own role in the process.
- Understand how meaningful interaction with students impacts satisfaction and fosters each of the five developmental outcomes.
- Know the procedure for requesting funding from floor funds, hall associations, ARH, and Up All Night.

Hall Coordinators and Assistant Hall Coordinators will have additional bulletin board and/or hall association attendance expectations, but these are not a part of the community development blueprint.
Community Development Blueprint:
The Five Outcomes

I. Knowledge of Individual & Community Needs
II. Focus on Academics & Expanding Knowledge
III. Personal Wellness & Health Choices
IV. Attending to the Well-Being of Others through Social
V. Commitment to Career Preparation

College Outcomes: Living in the Residence Halls
Outcomes of College: Living in the Residence Halls


Outcome One: Knowledge of Individual & Community Needs

“In addition to the general question ‘Who am I?’, freshmen often struggle with more specific identity questions based on gender, sexual orientation, race, cultural background, ethnic origin, or disability” (page 3)

“Freshmen express almost as much anxiety about finding supportive friends as they do about flunking out. All freshmen, regardless of background and experience, must develop an interpersonal support system with their fellow students. They must find friends and participate in activities that require cooperation and good interpersonal skills. They must, perhaps for the first time, relate to students, faculty, and staff of different cultural background, sexual orientation, life experience, physical ability, and skin color” (page 2)

Examples:

- Assist in exploration of personal identity
  - Gender, race/ethnicity, social class/socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation, spirituality/religion, etc.
- Residents have a positive sense of self-esteem to the extent that they see themselves as capable, worthy, and of value
- Developing community by encouraging self-governance of floor community including mutual values, goals, and assumptions
- Residents are autonomous members of the floor community and have internal locus of control.
- Resident Assistant builds strong connections between academic and social facets of college.
- Developing connections for residents by providing information of student or community organizations
- Support unique developmental needs of students with unique developmental needs (students of color, LGBTI students, etc).

Outcome Two: Focus on Academics & Expanding Knowledge

“Freshmen must succeed academically and intellectually. Ask freshmen what they fear most about going to college and most will say, ‘Flunking out.’ Most freshmen come to college with the primary purpose of preparing for a career by getting good grades and graduation, but many soon realize that an education is more than that. They recognize that they can learn how to learn, and also how to synthesize, integrate, criticize, and analyze what they learn. They can consider the moral, ethical, cultural, and spiritual implications of what they learn, and develop an appreciation for the esthetic side of life (Upcraft, 1985)” (page 2)

Examples:

- Create opportunities for engagement of academic experiences and courses to be integrated into residence hall activities.
- Assist residents’ connection with faculty and other individuals typically viewed as academic
- Introduce a new skill to enhance residents’ learning base or knowledge.

Outcome Three: Personal Wellness and Health Choices

“Freshmen must be aware of the impact of college on their physical and emotional well-being. They must be able to cope with the increased stress that college brings. They must learn to manage their time to meet their many commitments and deal with interpersonal stresses. They must make decisions about
alcohol and substance use, sexual activity, and nutritional habits. They must begin to think of maintaining health and wellness as an active rather than reactive process.” (page 3)

**Examples:**
- Awareness of sexual health including sexually transmitted infections, safe sex options, and general information regarding sex
- Awareness of physical health issues including exercise, managing weight, positive body image, eating healthy, staying well in the residence halls, etc.
- Development of financial management skills including managing a credit card, setting a budget, understanding your financial aid, deciding to move off campus, finding a part time job
- Developing healthy behaviors regarding use of alcohol and drugs
- Assist with identifying proper outlet for residents’ ‘free time’ into safe and healthy activities

**Outcome Four: Attending to the Well-Being of Others through Social Action**

“College needs to give students a stronger sense of connection with the larger world and a deeper spirit of commitment, even obligation, to others.” (page 3)

“It is true that students feel less [helpless] today than in the past, but the sense of [helplessness] persists. It is less apparent today because the desire to participate and the wish for change have also diminished. Today’s students need to know that their acts matter.” (page 23)

**Examples:**
- Build and connect residents toward opportunities for student leadership positions within floor community and greater campus community.
- Facilitate opportunities for student participation in activist experiences and create spaces for debate and free expression of ideas.
- Develop floor dynamics through which residents are invested in self governance of community.

**Outcome Five: Commitment to Career Preparation**

“Although some students enter college not knowing what they want to do, most have some career goal in mind. College is almost an immediate test of students’ career commitment: a large percentage change their majors, and others drop out because of career indecision. Changes in interests, lack of academic success, freedom from family pressures, and other factors all contribute to uncertainty about and changes in career choice. Freshmen must make some progress deciding on a career, and thus on a major field.” (page 3)

**Examples:**
- Establish connections for students regarding identifying possible career development topics (writing a resume/cover letter, participating in an interview)
- Connect residents with opportunities to possible jobs/occupations (work study, off campus, finding summer employment)