

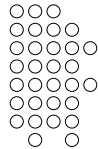
## Effective Practices in Recruiting and Retaining Live-in Residence Life Staff

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## Framework

- Student learning is enhanced and programs benefit from contributions of experienced staff
- Recruitment activities are time consuming and costly
- Departures can be disruptive, drain resources, and affect morale (Buck & Watson, 2002)



## Entry-level, Live-in Professionals

- Entry-level live-in professional residence life staff play a crucial role on campuses
- Increasing challenges in filling positions with well-qualified staff



## Literature Review

- Having competent, knowledgeable, and skilled professional staff in residential facilities is essential to promoting student learning and development on campus (Belch & Kimble, forthcoming; Belch & Mueller, 2003)
- These professionals have substantive student contact and significant responsibilities for the learning and welfare of students




- Professional positions in residence life provide an outstanding training ground for student affairs practitioners
- Staff develop skills needed in a variety of mid- and senior-level positions in student affairs




- Several key factors have converged to create greater challenges for some institutions in their ability to hire and retain RDs
  - more options for entering student affairs field
  - quality of life associated with living in
  - complexity and severity of student issues
- Many master's graduates declare no willingness to work in residence life






- Recent research has focused on:
  - Senior housing officers' perceptions of problems (Belch & Mueller, 2003; St. Onge & Nestor, 2005)
  - Quality of life issues among live-in professionals (Belch, 2005)
- Despite the emerging body of research in this area, little if any research identified successful and innovative recruitment and retention activities

### Current Study



- National study to examine best practices in recruiting and retaining entry-level live-in professionals in housing and residence life
  - What attracts candidates to these positions?
  - Why do they stay?



- Campuses identified using Delphi technique as having best practices in recruiting and retaining entry-level live-in professional staff
- Expert panel consisted of ACUHO-I Leadership Assembly members
- 72 group and individual interviews conducted by 3 researchers on 11 campuses

### Institutions




<u>Retention</u>	<u>Recruitment &amp; Retention</u>
Western Illinois University	Ball State University (IN)
University of Georgia	University of Florida
Emerson College (MA)	University of Maryland

Recruitment

East Carolina State University  
 Kansas State University  
 University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh  
 Seton Hall University (NJ)  
 Alfred University (NY)

### Today's Focus



- Recruitment and Retention Strategies
  - Policies
  - Processes
  - Perks
  - Personalities

### Strategies: Policies



- Pets
- Domestic partners
- Respecting living space
- Collateral assignments
- Professional development support
- Flexible scheduling/work hours
- Contract length

### Strategies: Policies

*In their own words. . .*



*There are a few things that we're working on now. All play a part in that quality of life piece. We have a domestic partner policy. . . The expanded pet policy where they can have a dog or a cat within the guidelines . . . we worked with the vet school in terms of temperament and size. . . But those two pieces have done much for us in terms of recruiting people.*

(Primary Recruiter)

### Strategies: Policies

*In their own words. . .*



*I enjoy traveling . . . I've requested to have a leave of absence for part of the summer. And based on what I think is my performance, and it's a slow time that they granted me that leave. . . If I'm committed to here, if I want to work here. . . the department really has, in my case the past two years, worked with me to keep me here, which is why I'm still here. I mean, I enjoy it. . . I truly enjoy what I do. (RD)*

### Strategies: Processes

- Ongoing communication during recruitment
- Attention to the individual
- Involvement in decisions
- Broad approach to professional development



### Strategies: Processes

*In their own words. . .*



*. . . they get a letter and it just basically tells them that the position has been filled . . . , I do let ones know that apply that don't meet the requirements . . . I let them know right away that they're not eligible so that they don't have any hope. . . I always tell the candidates they can call at any time and find out their status and I let them know that but then at the end, everyone does receive a letter. . . no matter what. (SHO/Primary Recruiter)*

### Strategies: Processes

*In their own words. . .*



*Your supervisor does a lot in terms of advocating for you to be a part of different things and as you are here longer you realize the different types of things that you want to be involved in, that's probably why you want to stay another year. (RD)*

### Strategies: Perks

- Making campus housing a home
  - External entrance
  - Washer & dryer
  - Decent furniture
  - Wooden kitchen cabinets
- Meal plan
- Access to degree programs
- Departmental plan to address amenities
- Amenities within department's scope and ability



### Strategies: Perks

*In their own words. . .*



*But it's the amenities. It's the bling-bling.  
That's how people are attracting students now.  
So you've got to kind of get with it to attract the  
staff. So he knows that I have a challenge in  
attracting full time professional staff because  
of the apartments and that I don't compare.*

(SHO)

### Strategies: Personalities

- Strong leaders and supervisors who care *and* have vision
- Exhibit a genuine enthusiasm for their work
- Are willing to change
- Encourage/expect professional development through words, actions, and resources
- Work deliberately to create staff ownership
- Acknowledge the importance of fit – for an RD and the department/institution



### Strategies: Personalities

*In their own words. . .*



*[She] is the supervisor of that and she is an excellent recruiter. For one thing she really cares about the people she supervises or that come to our campus so there's a lot of thought put into what we do. In other words, we look at our job description. Does it really fit who we are and what we do? We do a lot of that ahead of time which means we're very specific about what we do, and we give that to people up front. We think about the young professionals and what they need. (ProStaff)*

### Strategies: Personalities

*In their own words. . .*



*And I think including them in that – they sit at the same table with the director – and I think he really emphasizes that, 'I'm just one voice here, too, and I want everyone to feel like they can speak up.' (Professional Staff Member)*

### Challenges

- Location
  - As drawback
  - As draw
- Resistance to change
- Fiscal Limitations



### Keys to Recruitment

- Dedicated person
- Attention to detail
- Interview schedule
- Access to decision maker
- Professional visibility and involvement
- Using "employee alumni" to recruit



## Keys to Retention



- Staff feel valued
- Attention to professional development
- Supervision
- Possibility for promotion
- Asked to stay

## Discussion



- Salary
  - Competitive or in the ballpark
  - If salary very low, ability to sell the experience
- Relationship between successful recruitment and successful retention

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