

**Student Life Committee
Of
The Faculty Senate**

**Assessment
on the
Curricular Approach to Residence Life**

February 22, 2008

Introduction:

The Faculty Senate Committee on Student Life was given the charge by Provost Daniel Rich at the November 5, 2007 Faculty Senate Meeting to assess the development and implementation of the Residential

Life Curriculum that was discontinued during the Fall Semester of 2007.

In conducting this assessment, the Student Life Committee made observations in regards to the curriculum content and implementation, faculty inclusion, reliance on residence assistants in the implementation of the curriculum, the clarity over whether the program was mandatory or voluntary, learning outcomes and activities and the posting of materials on the University website. The Student Life Committee hopes that these observations will initiate progress in the development of a Residence Life program that is consistent with the University mission and that will meet the needs of the students in University's Residence Life programs.

History of Curricular Approach to Residential Life Programming

The first residential curricula were implemented during the 2004-2005 academic year. The 2007-2008 Academic year marked the fourth year that residential curricula were in use at UD. The concept of a residential curriculum was developed by staff in Residence Life at the University of Delaware. The goal of the Residence Life Curriculum was to enhance the learning opportunities for students and to better integrate the academic affairs and student life units and had the overall mission of promoting citizenship.

The stated goal of the curriculum was for students to:

Become an engaged and active citizen by understanding how your thoughts, values, beliefs, and actions affect the people with whom you live and recognize your responsibility to contribute to a sustainable society at a local, national, and global level.

From this stated goal twelve learning outcomes or competencies were developed:

1. Understand how your social identities affect how you view others.
2. Understand how differences in equity impact our society.
3. Understand your congruence with citizenship values.
4. Understand how others influence you.
5. Understand the impact of your decisions.
6. Understand the power of an individual in a community.
7. Understand the knowledge necessary for the development of a sustainable society.
8. Learn how to connect personal passions to vocational options in order to be able to contribute to a sustainable society.
9. Learn how to develop and sustain interdependent relationships.
10. Learn to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a sustainable society.
11. Learn the skills necessary to be a change agent.
12. Demonstrate civic engagement toward the development of a sustainable society.

The Residence Life Curricular approach included eight individual curricula being developed and

implemented in each of the eight residence hall complex on campus.

The components of each individual Residential Curriculum included:

- Complex Focus
- Learning Outcomes
- Learning Goals
- Sequence of Learning
- Strategies
- Lesson Plans
- Assessment Plans

Residence Life's articulated goals were addressed through a number of strategies including both floor meetings and one-on-one interviews with Residence Hall Assistants. The educational outcomes of the curricula were designed to directly connect to and support UD's ten goals of undergraduate education and to reflect the priorities of UD as stated in its mission statement.

In 2005, in an attempt to include a wide range of input regarding the curriculum, its implementation and assessment, the Residence Life leadership appointed a Curriculum Review Committee (CRC). The committee was given the authority to approve, approve with minor revisions, approve with major revisions, or reject each of the eight residential curricula. In the summer of 2007, the Provost asked that the Curriculum Review Committee be seated for the entire year in order to provide broader input into the design, implementation, and assessment of the residential curricula.

At that point, the CRC became a formal extension of the Academic and Student Affairs Council, an entity that was formed to promote the interaction between the academic and student affairs units.

During the Fall 2007 semester, an external organization gained access to the curricula as well as other information on the program and information that had been posted on the Residence Life website and led a public campaign that brought internal and external attention to the curriculum as well as their opposition to its implementation. Ultimately the decision was made by the University to discontinue the program. At the November meeting of the Faculty Senate, Provost Rich gave the Student Life Committee the charge to assess the circumstances that led to the discontinuing of the curricula.

Assessment

The Faculty Senate Committee on Student Life assessed the Residence Life Education Curriculum based on a review of the printed materials provided in the Residence Life Education Curriculum; a presentation from the Vice President of Student Life and the Director of Residence Life, a written report provided by the Director of Residence Life, a student forum on the topic and the deliberations of the committee.

1. Faculty Inclusion

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate believes that Residence Life should have relied on the faculty in the development of a Curricular Approach to Residence Life.

2. Curriculum Content and Implementation

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate acknowledges the fact that some of the topics that were addressed in the curriculum were worthy of discussion, but it would have been appropriate for the discussions on those topics to be led by qualified professionals and faculty.

3. Mandatory vs. Voluntary Participation

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate believes that there was not a clear understanding on whether the participation in the Residence Life Curriculum was voluntary or mandatory. Considering the nature of the topics, it would be imperative that students clearly understand

that it is voluntary rather than having the impression it was mandatory.

4. Reliance on Residence Assistants

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate believes that there was an inappropriate reliance on resident assistants in the implementation of the curriculum. It was not in the best interest of either the residence assistants or the residents that certain activities were not led by qualified professionals.

5. Learning Outcomes and Activities

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate believes that although the intent of the curriculum was to engage students in discussion and debate about important topics related to citizenship, on several occasions stated learning outcomes and activities suggested a particular view was a correct view over another rather than encouraging students to have an open and honest discussion.

6. Materials Used and Posted

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate believes that it was inappropriate for the educational materials of guest speaker Dr. Shakti Butler to be posted on the University website. The placement of the materials created an impression that these were the views of the Residence Life program and ultimately the University. Some of the posted material was not used by Dr. Butler in her workshop nor was it ever used in the residence halls with students. This makes the posting on the University website even more inappropriate.

Summary

What is most important from these observations is what can be learned. In moving to the future, the Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate would like to make the following recommendations in regards to the development of a new residence life program.

Recommendations

1. Use of the term “Curriculum”

Use of

“curriculum” and “educational” on a university campus implies academic content that is typically conveyed in classroom or laboratory settings.

This content has withstood rigorous review by faculty members and academic departments. The committee feels the term “educational” still conveys a classroom image and not an extracurricular activity that should be enjoyable as well as mind-expanding. To avoid any confusion, when talking about education that is planned to occur in residence halls, it is recommended that the term curriculum be replaced with “residence life program”.

2. Simplification

In order to ensure better oversight of the implementation of any residence hall program, it is recommended the number of plans be reduced from eight to two. One would be designed for use in primarily first year areas.

The other would be designed to be used primarily in upper class areas. This will also allow for more streamlined training of staff and overall management of the program.

3. Learning Opportunities are Optional

It is imperative that students clearly understand that participation in Residence Life programming is voluntary rather than having an impression that it is mandatory. Respecting the moral autonomy and

intellectual integrity of students should be a primary goal of all Residential Life programs. Such respect requires that no educational program of Residential Life be mandatory.

4. Content and Implementation

Given the unique opportunities that exist because of the residence hall setting, learning opportunities related to study habits, personal development, citizenship, community, sustainability, and diversity can and should continue to be available in the residence halls. To that end, it is recommended the mission statement and activities of Residence Life continue to address these opportunities; however, the specific learning outcomes, goals and implementation related to these opportunities must be revised. Residence Life should also be proactive in communicating with the students to determine which types of programs should be offered and what issues should be addressed.

5. Integration of the Broader UD Community

Residence Life Programs should be recognized as a shared university responsibility and collaboration between faculty and student life administrators should be encouraged as well as the utilization of existing resources within the Student Life Division and other Divisions at the University. It is recommended that Residence Life better identify how the educational experts among the faculty and in other UD offices can be interwoven into the overall Residence Life program from development to implementation. With this in mind the appropriate role of the residence assistant should also be clearly defined.

6. FYE Student Learning Outcomes

As an extension of the work being done by the Academic and Student Affairs Council, in the Spring of 2007, Provost Dr. Dan Rich created the First Year Experience Task Force. The charge of the task force is to review the entire first year experience of students, including residential education and current FYE structure, and make recommendations for change that will result in a more holistic and intentionally planned experience for students.

Residence Life should work with the leadership of the FYE to design residence life programs to support, where appropriate, the achievement of these eight outcomes.

7. Assessment Data Management

Future residence life programs should be assessed to determine if they are achieving stated objectives and if students feel their needs and interests are being met. This should be executed in partnership and collaboration with the Office of Educational Assessment rather than a full spectrum of tools being developed solely by Residence Life. An annual report should be completed and shared with the Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate.

8. Social Milieu of the Residence Hall

Programming in residence halls should not be an attempt to replicate learning models that occur in the classroom.

Rather, it should harness the social and community aspects of residential living in order to engage students in a vibrant, exciting, and fun living atmosphere. This would ultimately lead to not only greater academic success but more well rounded and socially responsible individuals. To that end, it is recommended that new Residence Life Programs clearly articulate the community development and social activities that will be facilitated by the Residence Life staff.

Ideally, these activities will provide strong bonds between staff and students that will ultimately serve to enhance participation and learning.

9. Ongoing Review

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate recommends that open lines of communication exist

between the committee and the Residence Life Staff. The Student Life Committee recommends that the Residence Life Staff annually present the Residence Life program that will be implemented for the following year to the Student Life Committee beginning of the Spring Semester for review and endorsement.

Summary

The Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate recognizes the efforts of all of those who contributed to this review.

