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# Resident Assistant Training Programs at Member Schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities

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RESIDENT ASSISTANT TRAINING PROGRAMS  
AT MEMBER SCHOOLS OF THE COUNCIL OF  
CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

An electronic thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

By

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2000  
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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

June 8, 2000

I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under my supervision by Richard Gwaltney entitled Resident Assistant Training Programs at Member Schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

Gwaltney, Richard Thomas. M.A., College of Education and Human Services, Wright State University, 2000. Resident Assistant Training Programs at Member Schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities.

This study examined resident assistant training programs at member schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. Training content, methods, personnel, timing, duration, budgetary issues and evaluation reports were analyzed in order to gain clearer understanding of what is being done to train RAs at this sampling of institutions. Data were collected electronically by e-mail where respondents were able to access an online survey.

The following six research questions were the focus of this study:

Research question 1 - What are the institutional demographics of the sample institutions?

Research question 2 - How much is being budgeted for training RAs at CCCU institutions?

Research question 3 - Who is responsible for planning and implementing RA training programs at CCCU institutions.

Research question 4 - What programs are in place to train resident assistants at CCCU institutions?

Research question 5 - What are the methods, formats, frequency and duration of RA training at CCCU institutions?

Research question 6 - What topics are addressed during RA training programs at CCCU institutions?

In summary, this research project yielded descriptive data that offers insights into RA training programs member schools of the CCCU. This research revealed that resident directors are utilized more frequently than others in RA training and only 24.5 % of respondent schools offer an academic course for RAs. There was also a high degree of similarity in topics addressed in RA training. These data should be valuable to member schools in making comparisons of their particular training programs to others.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to the people that mean the most to me in this world. Without you I would not be who I am today. Your patience and understanding during this time has made this all possible. To Kerry, Katie, and Ben I dedicate this paper and I thank you for the laughter, the love, and the tears that sustained me through it all. I

Love You.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### **General Background**

Resident assistants (RAs) are employed in virtually all American universities to work in their residence halls (Bowman and Bowman, 1995). This places RAs in a strategic position to impact a college student's development. Most students bring to the position the raw skills necessary to do the job, but it is believed by many that there is a need for comprehensive training programs in order to equip student para-professionals for this unique position. The RA position is a temporary one that brings with it a yearly turnover. Each year brings a new group of RAs , with some returning veterans, in need of skills and knowledge to perform their unique duties. Blimling believes that whether or not the RA is prepared to accept their responsibility is directly related to the quantity and quality of education in preparation for the position (1995). Due to the potential impact that RAs can have on a student's development, student services professionals have the obligation to research what is being done at their institutions and other sites to train these campus leaders.

#### **Significance of the Study**

Resident assistants are in a unique position to positively impact the development of students in the residence hall. RAs bring to the position many of the raw skills necessary to do the job but they are in need of proper training to equip them for the

task. This research of RA training programs is the first stage of evaluating what is being done in order to make necessary improvements to programs that will train more effective RAs. Well trained RAs can then be empowered to effect student growth and development on the college and university campus.

This study contributes toward the improvement of RA training programs at CCCU institutions in various ways:

1. It collected data that reveals what has and is presently being done to train RAs at CCCU institutions.
2. It reveals what is not being done at CCCU schools to train RAs.
3. This research collected data that allows individual CCCU

schools to compare and contrast what their institution is doing to train RAs with other institutions that have similar values and beliefs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to research resident assistant training programs at CCCU schools (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities). Training content, methods, personnel, timing, duration, budgetary issues, and evaluation reports were analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of what is being done to train RAs at this sampling of institutions.

### **Independent and Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables are the responses to the survey questions. There are no independent variables in this research project. The design of this research project is purposeful sampling and was intended simply to describe what is being done to train RAs at member schools of the CCCU.

## **Definition of Terms**

CCCU is defined as an organization of Christian colleges and universities which share similar ideology, mission, and philosophy toward higher education. There are 95 schools that are members of the CCCU.

**RA or resident assistant** is defined as a student para-professional who is entrusted with the oversight of a particular hall or living area in a residence hall.

When referring to training there are typically three modes of training which include: pre-selection, pre-service, and in-service.

**Pre-selection training** refers to those requirements for the RA position that take place prior to the interview process. This may come in the form of academic courses and/or other related seminars.

**Pre-service training** refers to the training sessions and preparation that take place immediately prior to the beginning of the academic school year.

**In-service training** refers to those training activities that take place during the academic school year while employed as a resident assistant.

**Training** refers to an activity that is designed to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to perform certain duties.

## **Research Questions**

The following six research questions were the focus of this study and guided collection of all data:

Research question 1 - What are the institutional demographics of the sample institutions?

Research question 2 - How much is being budgeted for training RAs at CCCU institutions?

Research question 3 - Who is responsible for planning and implementing RA training programs at CCCU institutions.

Research question 4 - What programs are in place to train resident assistants at CCCU institutions?

Research question 5 - What are the methods, formats, frequency and duration of RA training at CCCU institutions?

Research question 6 - What topics are addressed during RA training programs at CCCU institutions?

Information relevant to each question was acquired through a survey questionnaire.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were generated for this study:

1. Surveyed institutions followed the directions on the survey.
2. Surveyed institutions responded openly and truthfully to the survey questions.
3. It is assumed that the institutions surveyed represent a cross-section of the CCCU schools.
4. It is assumed that those institutions that did not respond are like those who did.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The study was limited to selected CCCU institutions and the results are not generalizable to RA training programs at public or other private colleges.

1. This study looks specifically at RA training programs at Christian colleges and universities that are members of the CCCU. This is due to common beliefs, values, mission, and practices that are shared within the CCCU organization.

2. The results of this study will not be generalized beyond the scope of the Christian college or university to all religiously affiliated colleges or non-sectarian colleges.

3. Results of this study may be applicable though to other college and university housing officers due to the similarities in job description and function.

### **Summary**

In summary, chapter one presented the general problem of investigating RA training programs at CCCU institutions. The survey instrument was described including the data collection procedures. The responses to the survey questions are the dependent variables and there are no independent variables in this research project. Included was the definition of terms frequently used throughout this paper. The five research questions which guide this research were also stated. This research was limited to those schools that are members of the CCCU.

In chapter two this study presents a review of literature related to RA training, residence life and Christian college history. Chapter three describes the methods and design of the study, including a description of the survey instrument and data collection procedures. In chapter four the results of the study are presented including demographics, budget, responsibility for training, pre-selection courses, pre-service training, in-service training and topics addressed. Chapter five presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations for student affairs practice at CCCU institutions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The following review of literature is offered to give greater insight into the need for RA training programs. An overview of the history of residence life and the Christian college are included to give a foundational understanding from which to start. The roles and responsibilities of RAs and the residence hall's role in student development have also been researched in order to present a broader understanding of the unique place of residence life in higher education. Literature pertaining specifically to RA training programs and the various modes of training are offered in order to further define the need and place of training student para-professionals in the residence halls.

#### **Key Points in Residence Life History**

Residence halls originated from a need generated by early universities in the middle ages (circa 1300's). Thousands of students would flock to the universities presenting a unique housing problem for the cities in which the universities were located. Thompson (1946) as quoted by Blimling (1995) suggests that, " anytime a group of learned men band together for the purpose of imparting knowledge, the youth of that age gather about them, sometimes in numbers which create very difficult problems in the field of housing" (p.20).

What started as providing a simple place to eat and possibly a meal has changed

throughout the years. Blimling also suggests that the collegiate system of Oxford and Cambridge focused on building a student's character and intellect where the residential college was the focus of this learning (1995). The English system of residential colleges (circa 1400's) directly affected the establishment of American universities due to the fact that the English colonists brought with them the traditions and concepts that were learned in England at Oxford and Cambridge.

The researcher is aware that there has been much debate through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century about the place of residence halls at the university because of changes in society and culture. Residence halls are no longer viewed as "a place to sleep" i.e. dormitory, but rather they provide an environment that can enhance and contribute to the student's education and personal development. This synopsis of the history of residence life is by no means exhaustive but is offered as a backdrop for understanding the place of residence life in higher education.

### **History of the Christian College**

The history of the Christian college is closely related to that of its secular counterparts. Upon examination of the colonial colleges it can be said that they had a distinctively Christian mission which was primarily to train students for ministerial positions. The colonial colleges did not operate solely for this purpose but they did seek to provide culture and breadth of thought for the leaders of society (Ringenberg, 1984). At Harvard the original goal of higher learning was, "to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, John 17:3. And therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning" (Cremin, 1997).

The Christian worldview dominated the intellectual development in America more than any other during the colonial period. Clergy were the leading intellectual class, as it were, and the purpose of the founding of most of the colonial colleges was to educate clergy. Yale in the early 1700's stated its primary goal, "that every student shall consider the main end of his study to wit to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly, sober life. (Ringenberg, 1984). It is apparent that education in America was distinctively Christian, in most, if not all of the colonial colleges. At the time of the Dartmouth College case of 1819 we see a distinct separation in the realm of higher education between religious and public interests which paved the way for the private religious college and development of state colleges.

With the increase of secularization in higher education and a fuller understanding of the establishment clause, there is an expansion of the private schools especially those of religious orientation. Many believe that religious beliefs and intellect need not be separate in higher education so the movement toward Christian higher education continued. Ringenberg (1984) classifies Protestant religious colleges in the following categories when dealing with the secularization issue:

- 1.) Essentially secular even if nominally Christian
- 2.) Generally religious
- 3.) Liberal Protestant
- 4.) Conservative Protestant

Each of these obviously vary in their doctrine and practice to some degree but share many similarities. The following section will analyze a portion of this population

which would mostly fall in the area of conservative to liberal protestant.

### **The Christian College**

CCCU stands for the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. The council is made up of 95 member schools in both the U.S. and Canada. Presently there are 167,858 students enrolled both full and part time, graduate and undergraduate, according to Jack Letarte of Taylor University in Indiana (personal communication, October 6, 1999). According to CCCU research, ([ccs.oneplace.com/index.html](http://ccs.oneplace.com/index.html).) there are 10 reasons why students choose Christian higher education:

- 1.) They want to grow within a caring, Christian community of learners.
- 2.) They prefer an institution where undergraduate teaching is the highest priority and they can study under faculty who care about their intellectual and spiritual growth.
- 3.) They desire a liberal arts-based education within a biblical worldview.
- 4.) They prefer a relatively small campus that can provide a better student to faculty ratio.
- 5.) They want personal attention to their financial aid needs.
- 6.) They prefer a values-oriented campus atmosphere with lifestyle expectations.
- 7.) They seek a community where God honoring scholarship, life-skills and service are integrated as legitimate parts of higher learning.
- 8.) They plan to pursue a major offered uniquely on a Christian campus.
- 9.) They respect the choice of their relatives and friends who attended a Christian College.
- 10.) They want to form life-long friendships with faculty and fellow students who share a commitment to Christ.

The following lists compare and contrast Christian higher education found on the CCCU website ([www.gospelcom.net/cccu/members/](http://www.gospelcom.net/cccu/members/)).

*Christian Colleges are similar to most other private colleges and universities in America because they are:*

Regionally accredited

Rooted in the liberal arts tradition

Offer a wide variety of degrees/majors

Students are eligible for federal and state financial aid

Represent both denominational and independent colleges and universities

Hire mostly Ph.D.s from non-religious institutions as new faculty

Graduates are employed in many market sectors

*They are different in giving more emphasis than most colleges to:*

Concern for the whole person: body, mind, and spirit

Focus on quality undergraduate teaching

Building a sense of community on campus

Student involvement in community service

Personal care of students by faculty and staff

Setting behavioral expectations regarding drug-free, safe environment

Campus worship times

*They have one defining distinction:*

They start from a belief that "God is" ... He created and gives order to our world, inspired the Holy Scriptures, allows us to know Him through His Son Jesus Christ, and is relevant to life and learning.

Why a Christian college? What is the rationale? Its distinctive feature according to Holmes, should be an integration of faith and learning, of faith and culture. We should not take a stance against secular learning and science and culture, as if there was a great gulf fixed between the sacred and the secular. All truth is God's truth, no matter where it is found, and we can thank God for it all (1987). The researcher is aware that throughout history the world has been divided over religion, particularly the person of Jesus Christ. It also has an unlimited potential of bringing people together and of arriving at truth. To disregard or marginalize Christian beliefs in higher education would be doing it a disservice. Our goal should be to integrate it and welcome it as viable option of viewing the world or the universe for that matter, that we endeavor to challenge students to question.

### **The Resident Assistant - Roles and Responsibilities**

Due in part to the frequency and intimacy of their contact with residents, resident assistants have great potential to influence students' lives positively (Winston and Ender, 1984). They suggest seven roles that a resident assistant fulfills while influencing students in the residence hall: model of an effective student, peer helper, information and referral agent, socializer, leader and organizer, clerical worker, limit setter and conflict mediator. While filling these roles RAs may confront a wide range of issues and responsibilities including: administrative tasks, medical emergencies, academic advising, discipline, alcohol abuse, suicide, cultural diversity, educational programming, community development, and stress management (Blimling, 1995 and Bowman & Bowman, 1995).

## **Student Development in the Residential Environment**

Most parents, students, and faculty are ignorant or highly skeptical of the importance of residence halls (Upcraft, 1982). Upcraft cites the following twelve conclusions drawn from various studies comparing students living in the residence halls with students living elsewhere. Students living in the residence halls:

1. Are more satisfied with their living environment.
2. Are more satisfied with their college experience.
3. Earn higher grades.
4. Are less likely to drop out.
5. Have more contact with faculty.
6. Have more contacts with other students and more satisfaction with their social life.
7. Participate more in student and recreational activities.
8. Have fewer emotional problems.
9. Have higher educational aspirations.
10. Report less conflict with parents.
11. Experience greater changes in values.
12. Have greater artistic interests (pp.72-73).

"Living on campus may be the most consistent determinant of college impact. Living on campus maximizes opportunities for social, cultural, and extracurricular involvement; and it is this impact that largely accounts for residential living's impact on student change" (Pascarella and Terrenzini 1991, p.611).

## **Resident Assistant Training**

RA training was divided into three categories by Winston and Anchors (1993): (1) pre-selection, (2) pre-service, and (3) in-service.

*Pre-selection* is typically a pre-requisite for applying for an RA position and usually comes in the form of an academic course or seminar. Winston and Buckner (1984) as cited by Bowman and Bowman (1997) report that RAs who received training in helping skills prior to beginning work reported less stress than those simultaneously receiving training while working as an RA.

*Pre-service* training concentrates on helping RAs acquire the specific information necessary to open and run the residence halls. This training is generally held shortly before the start of the academic year.

*In-service* training is training that should go on throughout the academic year and is most effective when it is problem or issue focused.

In their research, Bowman and Bowman (1995) address the issue of RA training by examining current practices and gathering data from residence life programs in the United States. The results that they found were informative and insightful for housing professionals specifically those charged with the responsibility of training resident assistants.

Bowman and Bowman (1998) report that most of the respondents indicated that their training program enjoyed strong institutional support. The Bowman study reports that residence hall directors, assistant directors of residence life, and directors of residence life have primary responsibility for planning and providing training. In regard

to frequency of in-service training their study reported that monthly training times received the highest response with 39.5%. The second highest responses were once per week with 11.1%. In regard to the duration of pre-service training or fall retreats the Bowman's report one week as the most frequent response with 30% responding. The Bowman's study also specified which topics were covered in each mode of training. It is the Bowman and Bowman study and survey instrument that was selected and altered, with permission, to study a different sampling of housing officers and schools for this particular research project.

### **Summary**

The review of related literature presented the rationale for this research study. Foundational to studying RA training practices is the understanding of the history of residence life. Equally important is a fuller understanding of the Christian college in contrast to that of state colleges and other private institutions. Another important finding was clarifying the roles and responsibilities of resident assistants whether in secular or religious settings. Lastly, this review of literature presented a fuller understanding of how students develop and benefit from the residential environment.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND DESIGN**

#### **Target Population**

The purpose of this study was to research resident assistant training programs at CCCU schools (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities). Training content, methods, personnel, timing, duration, budgetary issues, and evaluation reports were analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of what is being done to train RAs at this sampling of institutions. The target population for this study consists of 95 member schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities. These colleges share similar beliefs, lifestyle, and philosophy of higher education. The population does not include all religiously affiliated colleges and universities but is limited to the member schools of the CCCU.

#### **Sample**

The sampling procedure used in this research project is purposeful sampling. This term refers to the practice of selecting cases that are likely to be information rich according to the purpose of the study, Patton (1990) as cited by Gall, Borg and Gall (1996). The apparent strength of this procedure is that it would yield the desired descriptive data for the sample being studied. A weakness would be the limitation of applicability to the sampling of institutions that were researched. The sample of

institutions are representative of 33 Christian denominational affiliations. Twenty-seven states have CCCU member schools and there are 12 countries with 40 affiliated schools ([www.cccu.org](http://www.cccu.org)).

### **Instrument**

The survey instrument is two pages in length and was used with permission from Dr. Robert Bowman of Northwestern State University in Louisiana. Changes were made due to a different population being sampled in this research. After permission was granted by the original researcher to use and adjust the survey instrument, copies were given to various student development officers, deans, associate deans, vice presidents of student services, and WSU faculty members. Suggestions were solicited in order to shorten and focus the survey to this particular population. After changes were made to the survey instrument it was sent to the WSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval (See Appendix A). Upon approval of the Wright State IRB the instrument was submitted to the CCCU headquarters in Washington, D.C. for their approval as well (See appendix B). Most questions can be answered with a check mark in a box with a few questions necessitating numbers and brief descriptors.

### **Data Collection**

The survey instrument was placed on a webpage to be accessed by the CCCU schools being surveyed. A paper cover letter was first sent to the Chief Student Development Officers of each school, by mail, informing them that a survey was being done and to encourage the individual in charge of training resident assistants to respond to the questions within a two week period (See appendix A). An e-mail was then sent out

to the 95 member schools of the CCCU with instructions for filling out the survey (See appendix C). The responses to the survey were sent by e-mail directly to the principle researcher. The results were printed and saved both electronically and on paper. These responses were then placed on a spreadsheet where they were analyzed for trends and then calculations were done. The analysis of the data was then recorded and incorporated into the research document.

### **Summary**

This survey design is considered a purposeful sampling. This method usually yields information rich results that can assist the researcher in gathering pertinent data that are descriptive of the particular sampling of subjects. In this research project, the institutions surveyed yielded insightful data that serve the overall purpose of describing RA training programs at member schools of the CCCU. The data collection was done electronically by e-mail utilizing an online survey instrument. Results were sent directly to the researcher for analysis.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to research Resident Assistant training programs at CCCU schools (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities). Training content, methods, personnel, timing, duration, budgetary issues, and evaluation reports were analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of what is being done to train RAs at this sampling of institutions. The following six research questions were the focus of this study:

Research question 1 - What are the institutional demographics of the sample institutions?

Research question 2 - How much is being budgeted for training RAs at CCCU institutions?

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Research question 4 - What programs are in place to train resident assistants at CCCU institutions?

Research question 5 - What are the methods, formats, frequency and duration of RA training at CCCU institutions?

Research question 6 - What topics are addressed during RA training programs at CCCU institutions?

Information relevant to each question was acquired through an online survey questionnaire. Each computation was done using the divisor 49 (unless noted) which is the number of responding institutions

## **Institutional Demographics**

Of the 95 surveys that were sent out via e-mail, 49 were returned for a 51.6% response rate. The demographic information of the respondent schools can be seen in the following table in response to research question two.

**TABLE 1**

### Institutional Demographics

---

#### Total enrollment:

Mean = 1486  
Median = 1111  
Range = 424 - 4900

#### Total on-campus:

Mean = 767  
Median = 600  
Range = 150 - 2200

---

The schools that responded to the survey reported a ratio of one resident assistant for every 25 students on campus and a ratio of one resident director for every six resident assistants. Thirty-one respondents (63.2%) reported using the designator of RA or RD while 18 respondents (36.7%) reported using a title other than RA or RD. These titles include: student life assistant, community advisor, housing assistant, peer assistant, resident advisor, resident staff advisor, residence life coordinator, residence educator, director of men's and women's services, area coordinator, head resident and residence supervisor. All of the respondents reported utilizing student RAs ranging from nine to 114 dependent on the size of the campus population.

## **Budget**

Of the 49 respondents four schools did not report an actual amount that was budgeted per year for RA training. The remaining 45 schools reported the following budget allocations in response to research question two (See table 2).

**TABLE 2**

Budget Expenditures

---

Mean amount budgeted for RA training (Comprehensive) = \$3164.75
Median = \$3000
Range = \$500 - \$14000
Mean amount budgeted for training per RA = \$139.78
Median = 127.58
Range = \$29.41 - \$454.55

---

## **Responsibility for Training Programs**

In response to research question three, the 49 respondents reported the following concerning the position titles responsible for overseeing the RA training programs at their particular institution (See tables 3, 4, and 5). Residence life staff were utilized primarily to oversee the training programs, directors of residence life and resident directors were the job titles receiving the highest response at 26.5%.

**TABLE 3**

Position Responsible for the Overall RA Training Program

---

Position Title	N	%
Director of Residence Life	13	26.5
Resident Director	13	26.5
Associate Dean of Students	8	16.3
Associate Dean of Residence Life	7	14.3
Dean of Students	6	12.2
Vice President of Student Services	4	8
Director of Student Life	3	6
(Assistant VP, Director of Housing, Campus Life Coordinator, Dean of Christian Life, Director of Community Life)	1	2

---

*Note.* Responses add to more than 49 because institutions reported one or more persons responsible for RA training programs.

**TABLE 4**

## Position Responsible for Pre-Service Training

---

Position Title	N	%
Resident Director	27	55
Director of Residence Life	20	40.8
Associate Dean	7	14.3
Dean of Students	6	12.2
Dean of Student Life	5	10.2
VP of Student Services	2	4
Campus Life Coordinator & Assistant VP	1	2

---

*Note.* Responses add to more than 49 because institutions reported more than one or more persons responsible for pre-service training.

**TABLE 5**

Position Responsible for In-Service Training

Position	N	%
Resident Directors	28	57.1
Director of Residence Life	17	34.7
Dean of Students	5	10.2
Director of Student Life	3	6
Associate Dean of Students	3	6
Campus Life Coordinator	1	2
VP of Student Development	1	2
Counseling Department	1	2

*Note.* Responses add to more than 49 because institutions reported more than one or more persons responsible for in-service training.

**Pre-Selection Training**

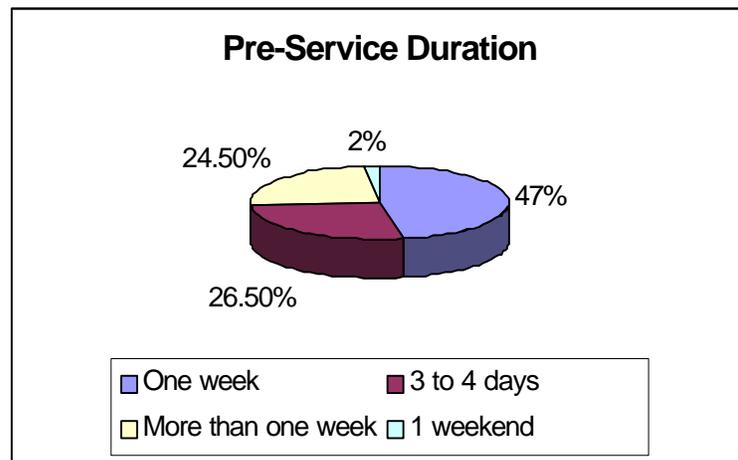
The following sections concerning training, format, duration and frequency are in response to research questions 4 and 5. Twelve respondents (24.5%) reported offering an academic course for their resident assistants. Eight respondents (16.3%) required the course prior to selection with four (8.2%) requiring the course after selection. All reported that the course lasted one quarter or semester in duration. Eleven of the 12 respondents awarded a letter grade for the course with one grading on a pass/fail basis. The instructors for the course varied and was made up of residence life staff, associate

deans and outside speakers. The most frequently reported position responsible for teaching the academic course for RAs was the director of residence life with 5 (42%).

The titles of the courses offered were reported as: Introduction to Leadership, Leadership Education, Leadership Development, Student Leadership Seminar, RA Leadership Practicum, RA Training, Residential Community Management and Micro-counseling.

### **Pre-Service Training**

Pre-service training that takes place before the start of the academic year is utilized to some extent by all of the respondents. Of these schools the highest response for the duration of the pre-service training was for one week (n = 23, 47%) followed by 3- 4 days (n = 13, 26.5%), more than one week (n = 12, 24.5%) and one weekend (n = 1, 2%). (See figure 1)



(Figure 1)

### **Format**

Institutions were surveyed concerning the format used during pre-service training times. Possible responses were: discussion, role play, lecture and other. (See table 6) Eighty-one % to 87.8% of the respondents reported utilizing all three methods of

discussion, role play, and lecture in their pre-service training. There were 11 respondents (22.4%) who reported implementing team-building, adventure, camping and ropes courses during their training times, while eight respondents (16.3%) reported using a retreat format as well.

**TABLE 6**

Pre -Service Format

Method	N	%
Discussion	43	87.8
Role Play	42	85.7
Lecture	41	84
(Team Building, Adventure, Experience, Camping, Ropes)	11	22.4
Retreats	8	16.3
(Reading, CPR, Small groups, Fun activities, video)	1	2

*Note.* Responses add to more than 49 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

**In-Service Training**

In-service training that takes place throughout the academic year is a vital part of the ongoing process of training student leadership in the residence halls. When surveyed on what formats are used to train RAs during this in-service time, 43 (87.8%) reported using discussion as the primary method, 29 (59.2%) respondents reported lecture as a method of training, while role play was recorded by 18 (36.7%) respondents (See table 7).

**TABLE 7**

In - Service Format

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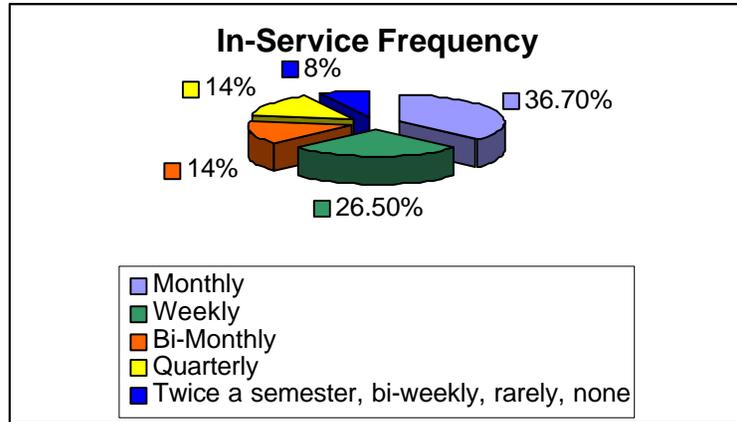
Method	N	%
Discussion	43	87.8
Lecture	29	59.2
Role play	18	36.7
Visiting, information, guest speakers, small groups, RD meeting, service, CPR, prayer & fellowship	1	2

---

*Note.* Responses add to more than 49 because respondents could choose more than one answer.

**Frequency**

The frequency of in-service throughout the academic year was also surveyed with all of the respondents reporting some activity. Monthly in-services were reported by 18 institutions (36.7%), weekly training times were reported by 13 (26.5%) institutions, bi-monthly and quarterly in-service training times both received seven responses (14.3%), bi-semesterly, bi-weekly, none and rarely each received one (2%) response for the frequency of in-service training times (See figure 2).



(Figure 2)

### **Topics Addressed in RA Training**

In regard to topics covered in RA training programs at CCCU member schools, the most frequently reported topics covered included: policies and procedures, peer helping and listening skills, and team building (n = 49). Discipline and confrontation (n = 48), programming, conflict resolution, and spiritual growth and nurture (n = 47), campus resources, time management and leadership (n = 46), community development, and administrative tasks reported (n = 45). Respondents were able to answer more than one response with these topics rounding out the top five areas addressed during RA training.

Additional topics frequently covered in RA training included alcohol use and abuse (n = 44), referral procedures (n = 42), goal setting and eating disorders (n = 40), and homesickness and burnout (n = 34). Racial issues were only reported by (n = 29) institutions. Various student development theorists were also reported as follows: Chickering (n = 20), Kohlberg (n = 15), other theorists (n = 8), Perry and Fowler (n = 7) each and Gilligan (n = 5). (See table 8)

**TABLE 8**

Frequency Distribution for Content Areas in RA Training

Content Area	N	%
Policies and procedures	49	100
Peer helping and listening skills	49	100
Team building	49	100
Discipline	48	98
Confrontation	48	98
Programming	47	96
Conflict resolution	47	96
Spiritual growth and nurture	47	96
Campus resources	46	94
Time management	46	94
Leadership	46	94
Community development	45	92
Administrative tasks	45	92
Alcohol use and abuse	44	90
Referral procedures	42	86
Goal setting	40	82
Eating disorders	40	82
Homesickness	34	69
Burnout	34	69
Racial issues	29	59
Leading small groups	28	57
Date rape	25	51
Student development theory		
Chickering	20	41
Kohlberg	15	31
Other theorists	8	16
Perry	7	14
Fowler	7	14
Gilligan	5	10
First aid	5	10
(CPR, fire safety, crisis management)	3	6
(Myers-Briggs, stress management, diversity)	2	4
(Identifying risk behavior, drug use, safety issues, roommate negotiation, pregnancy, abortion, city resources, developing morality, exercise, study skills, evangelism, inclusion, mentoring, relationship building, sexual harassment)	1	2

*Note.* Responses total more than 49 because respondents could chose more than one answer.

## **Summary**

The results of this study display a description of the methods, format, budget, frequency, duration and content of RA training programs at member schools of the CCCU. There are facets of the study that offer insights of particular interest to student affairs professionals, specifically those at member schools of the CCCU. Expenditures for RA training, training modalities, those directly responsible for RA training programs, and the ratios of RAs to on-campus students are a few of these insights.

This research instrument was selected and adapted, with permission from Dr.'s Robert and Vicki Bowman. Its original intent was to gather descriptive data that would give insights into what is being done in the student services field to train resident assistants. Before studies like this were done, the information used to train RAs was typically determined by experience, in what was done at ones own institution. This type of study allows for student affairs professionals to compare and contrast their own training programs with their colleagues at other colleges and universities.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

In this study the researcher surveyed member schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities in order to determine what procedures were used to train resident assistants. The instrument used was a survey adapted with permission and subsequently altered in order to be shortened to focus the research to this particular sampling of institutions. The research was done electronically, by e-mail with links to an on-line survey (See appendix C).

Participating institutions were questioned on a variety of items. Demographic information was requested pertaining to institutional size, on-campus population, and number of RAs employed. Ratios of RAs to students and RDs to RAs were also determined. Budgetary issues were surveyed to determine overall budget for training and the investment that is made per RA at this sampling of institutions (See tables 1&2).

This study also had as an objective to observe the commonalities and differences in various areas of training. Method or format used in each training mode was researched (see tables 6 & 7). The determination of the position directly responsible for the comprehensive and individual modes of training was also of interest to this researcher (see tables 3, 4 & 5). The duration, timing, and frequency of each mode of training (i.e.

pre-selection, pre-service, and in-service) were assessed (see figures 1 & 2). Finally, areas of content were researched in order to gain a deeper understanding of which topics are being addressed in RA training and which ones are being neglected (see table 8).

### **Conclusions**

Bowman and Bowman (1998) report from a similar survey that most of the respondents indicated that their program enjoyed strong institutional support. This study revealed that CCCU schools invest, in training, an average of \$139.78 per every RA employed at their institution with budget expenditures ranging from \$500 to \$14,000 per year. Determination of adequacy of training budget was not assessed. Bowman and Bowman (1998) however, record that a vast majority of their respondents consider their funding as adequate.

One area of particular interest was in regard to the position title responsible for the RA training programs, both overall comprehensive and each individual mode. This study revealed that the positions of resident director and directors of residence life received the highest response in all the modes, including the overall responsibility of the RA training program (see tables 3, 4, & 5). It is apparent that CCCU institutions rely heavily upon residence life staff such as RDs for para-professional staff development. Similarly, CCCU institutions rely upon directors of residence life who are apparently hired for oversight of the training programs. Bowman and Bowman (1998) report that residence hall directors, assistant directors of residence life, and directors of residence life have primary responsibility for planning and providing training.

In regard to academic courses, this study reports that 24.5% (n = 12) of the

respondents offer courses to train their resident assistants. Only eight of these require the course prior to selection. Blimling (1995) suggests that whether or not an RA is prepared to accept their responsibility is directly related to the quantity and quality of education in preparation for the position. This does not necessitate that institutions must offer and require academic courses prior to selection. It does infer that there is a need to educate new RAs in some format prior to their time of service during the academic year.

It is this researcher's opinion that the pre-service training, usually one week prior to the start of the year, is not ample time to fully prepare a student to perform the responsibilities of a resident assistant. Possibly a spring quarter seminar in a retreat format and summer follow-up would facilitate this preparation. Understanding that this unique position usually has a sizeable turnover each year it would seem prudent to invest more time prior to the start of the year. Pre-service and in-service training times are typically times of information overload and other stressors.

The frequency of in-service training at CCCU schools was similar to that of the Bowman's study with 36.7% reporting monthly training times compared with 39.5% as the highest response from Bowman and Bowman (1998). The second highest responses were also the same with both reporting once per week with CCCU schools reporting 26.5% and the Bowman study 11.1%. In regard to the duration of pre-service training or fall retreats both studies report one week as the most frequent response, 30% for the Bowman's study and 47% for this research project.

Topics addressed in training programs for RAs at CCCU institutions showed a great deal of similarity. Twenty-two content areas received over a 50% response when

questioned on topics addressed in RA training. Only eight topics recorded less than ten responses (N = 49). The difference in this area with the Bowman's study (1998) was that it specified which topics were covered in each mode of training, where this study combined all topics with the overall training program. The focus on racial and diversity issues differed between the two studies with the Bowman's reporting 75.5% to 80% responding, and the CCCU schools reporting 59%.

### **Limitations**

There are several noteworthy limitations in this study. The CCCU institutions are quite distinct from their non-sectarian counterparts, particularly in the areas of doctrine, lifestyle, worldview and philosophy of higher education. These differences must be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study. The emphasis on an individual's spiritual growth and development, Christian character, and lifestyle commitment may drastically affect the lens through which one views the student affairs profession and mission.

It would be noteworthy to add that not all of the CCCU share the exact same convictions across the board, but there are many areas where there is a consensus (see pg.10). It should also be noted that Christian colleges and universities do share some similarities with their secular counterparts. It is intriguing to see that both secular and religious colleges often refer to a student's growth in four main areas: academics, physical, spiritual and social. These four areas are the same ones specified in one of the Gospels referring to Jesus as a young man who "grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). The methods and philosophy of how to facilitate

this process of growth is where the greatest differences may lie between the two types of institutions.

### **Recommendations**

There are several areas that would benefit from further study as a result of this research project. The following recommendations were generated from the data.

Recommendation 1 - In regard to those responsible for RA training programs at CCCU schools. Since RDs are utilized to such a great extent in the training of RAs at this sampling of schools it raises a few questions for further research.. How well prepared are the RDs to oversee this type of preparation? What are the professional standards for RDs ? How well are they compensated? Due to the increase of professional standards in the field of student services, both secular and religious, it could prove beneficial to explore these areas more thoroughly.

Recommendation 2 - Preparedness of new RAs prior to the start date of employment is the second area that this researcher believes warrants more investigation. How well equipped do newly selected RAs feel prior to the start of a new year? What do new RAs need to know that would facilitate the sense of preparedness? What modes of training would be most effective? Which responsibilities do RAs feel least prepared to handle in their job description? Answers to these questions could yield results that could help to produce resident assistants that are better equipped to carry out their responsibilities in the residence halls.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to research resident assistant training programs at CCCU schools (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities). Training content, methods, personnel, timing, duration, budgetary issues, and evaluation reports were analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of what is being done to train RAs at this sampling of institutions. While there are differences in philosophy, lifestyle, and belief between religious and secular schools there are similarities as well. Results from the Bowman and Bowman study also were integrated into this chapter in order to make comparisons and contrasts between the two samples.

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**Appendix A**  
**Cover Letter**

March 15, 2000

Dear Colleague,

My name is Rich Gwaltney and I am a graduate student in the department of Educational Leadership at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. My thesis topic is *RA Training Programs at Member Schools of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities*.

You are invited to participate in a survey which should give greater insight into what the CCCU institutions are doing to train their resident assistants and thus allow us to make better assessments and improvements to our particular training programs. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your institution's name does not appear on the survey. There are no known risks to participation in this survey. An e-mail will be sent to you within a week of this letter where you directly can log on to a URL address and complete the survey. The survey should only take approximately 15-20 minutes. When the e-mail is sent to you please forward it to the person who is most knowledgeable about your RA training program for completion.

Dr. Ron Mahurin, VP for Professional Development and Research with the CCCU has reviewed this project. He has given permission for me to extend this invitation to you to voluntarily participate. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Rich Gwaltney at the following address: [Gwaltney@cedarnet.cedarville.edu](mailto:Gwaltney@cedarnet.cedarville.edu) .

Sincerely,

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Richard T. Gwaltney  
Principal Researcher  
P.O. Box 601  
Cedarville College  
Cedarville, OH 45314  
(937)766-8519

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Charles W. Ryan Ph.D.  
Faculty Advisor  
Dept. of Educational Leadership  
Wright State University  
Dayton, OH 45435  
(937)775-3286

## Appendix B

### Survey

#### RA Training Programs at CCCU Institutions

##### Part I. Institutional demographics

1. What is the total enrollment at your institution?
2. What is the total number of on-campus residents?
3. How many Resident Assistants do you employ?
4. How many Resident Directors?
5. Do you use titles other than Resident Director and Resident Assistant?  
No \_\_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_\_ Specify \_\_\_\_\_
6. How much is Tuition \_\_\_\_\_?  
Room and Board \_\_\_\_\_?  
Fees \_\_\_\_\_?

##### Part II. Program information

7. How much pay do your Resident Assistants receive per year?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_
8. What is your yearly training budget?  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who is the person responsible for your training program?  
(Position title only)

##### A. Pre-selection programs

10. Do you require an academic course or seminar before selection of resident assistants?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Course \_\_\_\_ Seminar \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_ (Describe)

11. If so, What is the title of the course or courses required?

12. Who teaches this course? (Position title only)

13. What is the duration of this course or seminar?

One night \_\_\_ Weekend \_\_\_ Week \_\_\_ Quarter/Semester \_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_ (describe)

14. How is the class graded?

Pass/Fail \_\_\_ Letter grade \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_ (Specify)

**B. Pre-service programming**

15. How much time is spent during Pre-Service training? (Before the year) check one.

1 weekend \_\_\_ 3-4 days \_\_\_ 1 week \_\_\_ more than 1 week \_\_\_

16. In what format is the pre-service training offered?

Lecture \_\_\_ Discussion \_\_\_ Role play \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_ ( Please specify)

17. Who is responsible for planning your pre-service training? (Position title only)

**C. In-service programming**

18. How frequently do you have in-service training? Check one

Weekly \_\_\_ Bi-monthly \_\_\_ Monthly \_\_\_ Once a quarter/semester \_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_ (Please specify)

19. In what format is the in-service training?

Lecture \_\_\_ Discussion \_\_\_ Role play \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_ (Please specify)

20. Who is responsible for planning your In-service training? (Position title only)

#### **D. Content**

Please check all of the following topical areas that your institution has covered in pre-service, in-service, and academic courses to train resident assistants.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student development theory    | <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chickering                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Time management          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perry                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating disorders         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gilligan                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol use/abuse        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kohlberg                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fowler                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Homesickness             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community development         | <input type="checkbox"/> Burnout                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative tasks          | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peer helping/listening skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Date Rape                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication skills          | <input type="checkbox"/> Team building activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programming                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading small groups     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal setting                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict resolution      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Referral procedures           | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual growth/nurture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campus resources              | <input type="checkbox"/> Confrontation            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Racial issues                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and procedures  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)        |   |

Please attach any information (calendar of events, agenda, syllabi, etc..) you might have readily available which describes your various training schedule or events for resident assistants.

Check here if you would like to request a copy of the results of this survey

## Appendix C

### Survey Cover Letter

**From:** Richard Thomas Gwaltney  
**To:** arlis.wood@oc.edu ; barnardw@acu.edu ; bdrummon@...  
**Date:** Tue, Mar 21, 2000 4:40 PM  
**Subject:** RA Training Survey

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Rich Gwaltney and I am a graduate student at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. My Thesis topic is *RA Training Programs at Member Schools of the CCCU*. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes or less to complete. You will need some figures concerning: enrollment, tuition, # of RAs, and overall budget for your institution's RA training program.

When you receive this e-mail please forward it to the individual who is responsible for (or most knowledgeable of your RA training program).

You can log on to the following URL address to fill out the survey at your convenience.

<http://www.gwaltney.cjb.net>

I am requesting that you have it completed by Friday March 31st, 2000.

Results will be available upon request and completion of this research project.

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Rich Gwaltney  
Cedarville College

