Recruitment and retention of entry-level staff in housing and residence life: A report on activities supported by the ACUHO-I Commissioned Research Program

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the ACUHO-I Commissioned Research Program

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Recruitment and Retention of Entry-Level Staff in Housing and Residence Life

For the past several years, many housing and residence life operations have had fewer candidates apply for the entry-level resident director position. Yet, although these institutions have experienced a shortfall in candidates, a number of housing operations continue to receive a large number of interested applicants through their recruitment efforts and they are able to retain these staff for several years.

In 2004, a team of researchers was awarded an ACUHO-I Commissioned Research grant to study several issues central to recruitment and retention of entry-level staff. The researchers completed six studies that are described in this report:

1 International Study Problem Assessment
An international survey to identify factors significant in recruiting and retaining staff in entry-level housing and residence life positions internationally and to understand the scope of the problem worldwide

2 Career Commitment/Position Analysis
A study to assess elements of the RD job and work environment and examine which factors are significant predictors of current RD attitudes toward their organization and their career

3 Best Practices in Recruitment and Retention
A study to identify institutions that are successful in hiring and retaining entry-level, live-in professional staff; describe the strategies utilized; and understand the institutional factors that may play a role in their success

4 Supervision and Mentorship
A study to examine the quality and nature of the mentor relationship and identify what aspects of the relationship between supervision and mentorship contribute to staff intentions to remain in their position, their institution, and/or the field of housing and residence life

5 Image of Housing and Residence Life
A study to assess image perceptions of the RD job and housing profession among potential applicants and examine the link between image and job and career intentions

6 Impact of Professional Development on Retention of Staff in Housing & Residence Life
A study to assess the role that professional development opportunities play on commitment and connection to the field of housing and residence life staff

Led by Tom Ellett, the research team has completed several years of work that contributes to the central mission of the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International and its members. It is our hope that this report can provide a foundation for campus discussions regarding strategies for improving the recruitment and retention of entry-level staff in housing and residence life. Having skilled staff in these positions can contribute to the successful accomplishment of goals to promote student learning, development, and retention.

① Assessment of Problem: Senior Housing Officers' Perceptions of the Recruitment and Retention of Entry-Level Housing and Residential Life Staff

Stephen St. Onge, Thomas Ellett, Eric Nestor, and Tom Scheuermann

To determine the scope of the problem of recruitment and retention of entry-level, live-in housing professional staff, senior housing officers (SHOs) were surveyed electronically in the fall of 2004[1]. When asked to rate their perceptions of both recruitment and retention of entry-level staff in housing and residence life on their campus, the results showed more concern with recruitment than retention but overall did not demonstrate a significant problem based on SHO perceptions. This is in contrast to other inquiries indicating a concern in these areas (c.f., Belch & Mueller, 2003, Jones, 2002)

Small Housing Operations versus Large Housing Operations

A statistically significant difference was found between small and large campus SHOs perceptions regarding recruitment (p< 0.0178) and retention concerns. Small school SHOs perceived a larger concern than did large school SHOs.

Large school SHOs perceived retention on their campus to be easy or very easy in greater numbers than small school SHOs and the difference was statistically significant (p<0.0001*).

Senior Housing Officer Perceptions

Recruiting is a Concern on my Campus

Small Housing Operation (Fewer than 1000 Beds)

- 3% Strongly Agree
- 15% Strongly Disagree
- 25% Agree
- 30% Disagree
- 31% Neither Disagree Nor Agree

Large Housing Operation (1000 or More Beds)

- 9% Strongly Agree
- 6% Strongly Disagree
- 26% Disagree
- 36% Agree
- 23% Neither Disagree Nor Agree
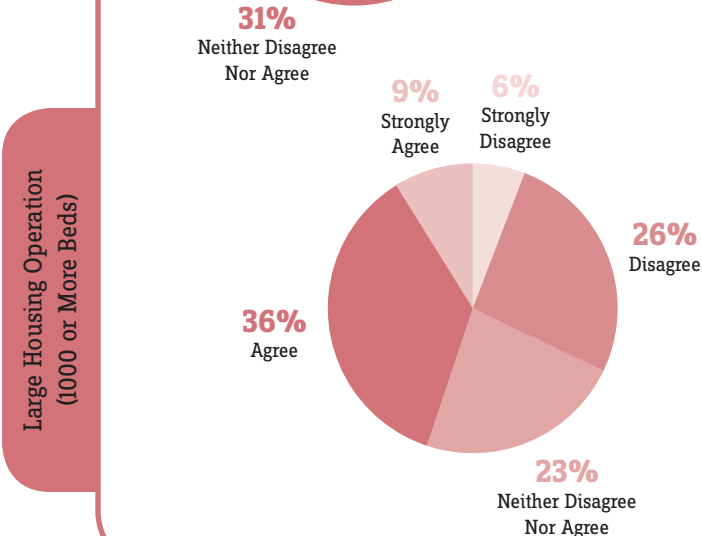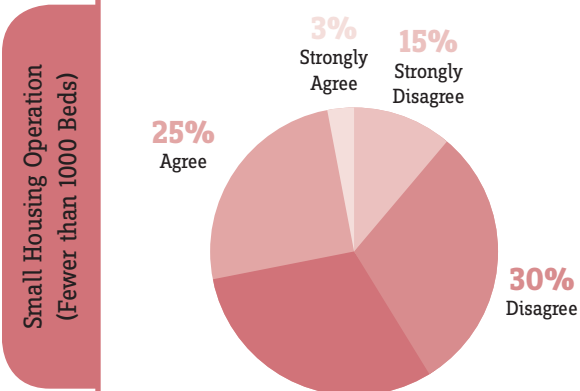
Retention on my Campus is...

Small Housing Operation (Fewer than 1000 Beds)

- 1% Very Easy
- 3% Very Difficult
- 22% Easy
- 36% Difficult
- 38% Neither Easy Nor Difficult

Large Housing Operation (1000 or More Beds)

- 7% Very Easy
- 3% Very Difficult
- 16% Difficult
- 32% Easy
- 43% Neither Easy Nor Difficult
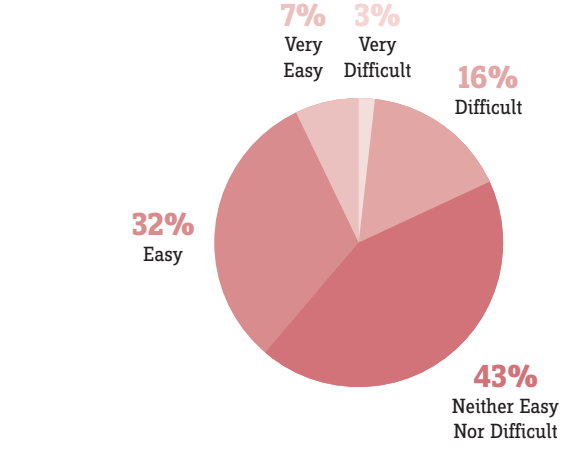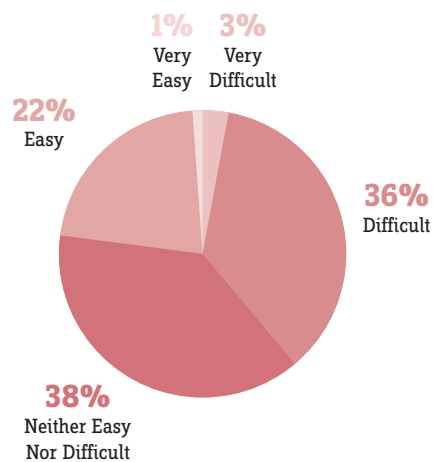
Conclusions

In general it appears that the perception of the recruitment and retention problem of entry-level housing and residence life staff is worse than the actual problem. This may be true in general, but smaller housing programs are identifying problems in recruiting and retaining staff that larger schools are not. This is an important issue, as smaller institutions need to develop the resources and processes most likely to positively impact their success in recruitment and retention efforts, and must allocate limited resources (e.g., money and time) strategically.

Average Annual Starting Salary for an Entry-Level Staff Member in Housing:

$24,213

Highest Degree for Entry-Level Staff:

58% Bachelor's Degree
31% Master's Degree
11% Currently pursuing a degree

Living Requirement for Staff

5% Live-off
12% Live-on
83% Live-in

Years in Position

2% <1 year
19% 1 year
34% >3 years
45% 2-3 years
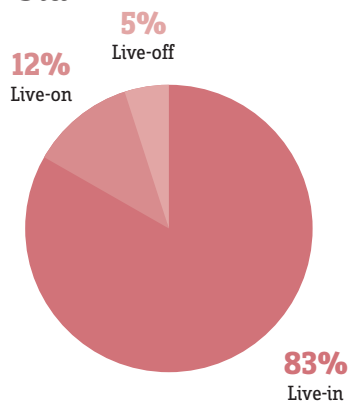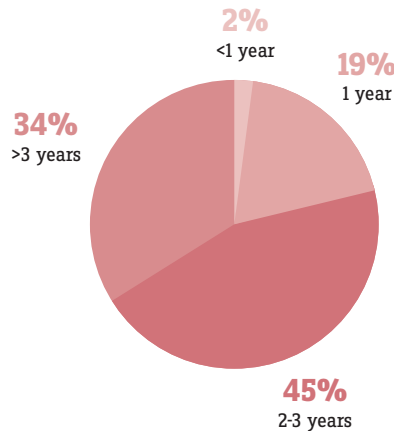
A clear majority of staff (79%) stay their position for longer than two years.

Based on our results, we were able to calculate a staff turnover ratio. Nationally, about 14% of entry-level staff turn over each year.

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[1] The survey was sent to 938 SHOs, all from ACUHO-I institutions; 417 completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 44.5%. The respondents were from all 11 ACUHO-I regions; from a low of five and six respondents from the OACUHO and AACUHO regions, respectively; to a high of 71 and 74 respondents from the NEACUHO and SEAHO regions, respectively. Although this study was targeted internationally, responses were essentially U.S.-based.

② Career Commitment Among Housing Professionals: A Position Analysis

John Christopher

Recruitment and retention of entry-level professionals in the housing and residence life (HRL) profession is an ongoing challenge for housing leaders. Programs to retain current staff may help reduce time and money spent recruiting, selecting, and training new staff. Increased retention of staff may lead to more efficient and stable programming and services. In a systematic study, Belch and Mueller (2003) found that senior housing officers reported retention issues in the resident director position.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to measure and examine aspects of the Residence Director (RD) work experience to predict their commitment to a career in HRL. To achieve this, measures of several aspects of the work experience were tested for their relationship to measures of career commitment and loyalty among entry level and senior housing professionals.

Work Experience Measures

- Job Autonomy
- Job Burnout
- Job Involvement
- Workload
- Dissatisfaction
- Skill Utilization
- Role Ambiguity
- Job Satisfaction
- Perceived Support
- Professional Development Fairness

Career Measures

- Career Resilience
- Career Planning
- Career Identity
- Career Loyalty

Methods and Findings

Sample

A web survey of career and work related attitudes were distributed to those in professional positions at 231 ACUHO-I member institutions. These institutions were recruited with announcements at ACUHO-I, in regional newsletters, and through direct mail brochures. From a master list of staff members, 3,101 individuals were invited to complete the survey. Of these, 1,574 returned a survey for a response rate of 50%. Of these surveys, 1,243 were usable for final analysis. The sample characteristics were as follows:

Age	31 - 35 years
Income	$35,000 - $39,000
Education	Some graduate school
Gender	50% Female, 41% Male, 0% Other
Marital Status	53% Single, 42% Married, 4% Other
Job Level	31% Residence Director, 69% Other
Institution	Size 5% Small, 95% Large
Institution Status	22% Private, 78% Public
Race	83% White, 8.2% Black, 2.5% Asian, 3.2% Hispanic, 3.1% Other

Results

Regression coefficients were analyzed to identify which work experiences measures had an impact (or strong statistical relationship) to career measures. Also, the means scores for work experiences were analyzed to identify which measures could be most improved (or had low mean scores) among RDs and all HRL professionals in the sample.

- Job burnout was identified most frequently as the work experience measure for having a high impact on career measures and needing improvement among HRL professionals and RDs.
- A second group of work experience measures - Job Involvement, Workload Dissatisfaction, Satisfaction with Promotion Opportunities, and Professional Development Outcome Fairness - were identified as having an impact on career measures and needing improvement.
- For the RDs alone, role ambiguity was identified as having an impact on career measures and needing improvement.

Implications - Burnout & Workload

Christine Maslach defined burnout as a sense of exhaustion, cynicism, and negative self-evaluations about the work experience. Maslach also identified work overload as a condition that leads to burnout (Nelson, 2005).

Job Burnout

- It occurs over time
- Mismatch between job design and employee skill
- Decision making is chaotic and unclear
- Accountability is low

Workload Dissatisfaction

- Exists when employees don't have the resources or skills to handle a high volume of work
- Work is high in intensity, complexity, and duration

Work associated with HRL operations may put a high degree of strain on resident directors and other housing professionals. Housing leaders could address these conditions by redesigning jobs and work processes to optimize factors that may reduce job burnout clarity, consistency, responsibility, task volume, and task duration. Housing leaders can also address this problem by recruiting and selecting staff who are better prepared to handle the unique demands of HRL operations.

Additional Implications

Promotional Opportunities

Without promotion opportunities, career advancement is difficult to achieve and, logically, dissatisfaction is a likely result (Markham, Harlan, & Hackett, 1987). Housing leaders likely have less influence over actual promotion opportunities since organizational structure and budgeting may be outside their control. However, housing leaders may be able to enhance the perceptions that promotions are attainable by ensuring that clear and consistent policies, fair evaluation criteria, and manageable selection procedures are used to determine promotions.

Role ambiguity

King and King (1990) identified role ambiguity as a sense of confusion about expectations on the job. Housing leaders can reduce role ambiguity by providing RD training and orientation that is focused on clarifying job tasks, skill building, and job requirements. Additionally, ambiguity may be reduced by having RDs negotiate expectations for tasks that are outside of the scope of their job.

3 Best Practices in the Recruitment and Retention of Entry-Level, Live-In Staff

Holley A. Belch, Maureen E. Wilson, and Norbert W. Dunkel

Having competent, knowledgeable, and skilled professional staff in residential facilities is essential to promoting student learning and development on campus (Belch & Kimble, 2006; Belch & Mueller, 2003). These professionals have substantive student contact and significant responsibilities for the learning and welfare of students. However, many campuses face increasing challenges in filling these positions with well-qualified staff while others demonstrate success in recruiting and retaining staff.

Several key factors converged to create these challenges for some institutions in their ability to hire and retain staff:

a.   more employment options exist for those entering the field;
b.   the quality of life associated with living in;
c.   the complexity and severity of student issues, and
d.   some master's graduates express no desire to live in.

In 2005, a team of three researchers, supported by an ACUHO-I Commissioned Research grant, designed a study to answer the following questions:

1.   What institutions in the United States are considered to have achieved best practices in the recruitment of entry-level, live-in professional staff in housing and residence life?
2.   What institutions in the United States are considered to have achieved best practices in the retention of entry-level, live-in professional staff in housing and residence life?
3.   What specific practices do these identified campuses engage in that are perceived to be successful?

A Delphi method of inquiry was selected to identify the institutions with best practices in these areas because of its applicability to utilizing an expert panel to collect informed judgments on a specific issue (Reid, 1988) and it is particularly useful in determining solutions to existing problems (Uhl, 1983). This research methodology is a consensus building approach and as such collects the perspectives and opinions of a group of experts. The expert panel was drawn from ACUHO-I's Leadership Assembly and Small College Network.

The panel ultimately identified 11 campuses with best practices:

Recruitment

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

Retention

Emerson College (MA)
University of Georgia
Western Illinois University

Recruitment & Retention

Ball State University (IN)
University of Florida
University of Maryland College Park

Members of the research team were assigned to individual campuses and conducted site visits in the spring of 2005. Data sources included focus groups, individual interviews, document analysis, and observation.

The research team conducted more than 75 interviews to learn the approaches housing staff utilize to staff those critical positions from both a recruitment and retention perspective. This study identified successful and innovative recruitment and retention strategies and activities that focused on the following:

Key Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Policies
· Allowing pets
· Allowing domestic partners to live in
· Respecting living space
· Providing collateral assignments
· Professional development support
· Flexible scheduling/work hours
· Providing a twelve month contract or flexibility
  when able to accommodate

Processes
· Ongoing communication during recruitment
· Attention to the individual
· Greater involvement in decisions
· Broad approach to professional development

Perks
· Making campus housing a home
   · External entrance
   · Washer and dryer in apartment
   · Contemporary furniture
   · Wooden kitchen cabinets
· Meal plan
· Access to degree programs
· Departmental plan to address amenities
· Amenities within department's scope and ability

Personalities
· Strong leaders and supervisors who care and
  have vision
· Staff who exhibit a genuine enthusiasm for
  their work
· Leadership that shows willingness to change
· Professional development encouraged and
  expected through words, actions, and resources
· Working deliberately to create staff ownership
· Acknowledging the importance of fit both for
  prospective employee and for the
  department/institution

Keys to Recruitment

· A dedicated person with great attention to detail
  to coordinate staff recruitment and hiring
· Well organized interview schedule
· Candidate access to hiring decision maker
· Current staff who are professionally visible
  and involved
· "Employee alumni" who had good experiences help
  to recruit new applicants

Keys to Retention

· Staff feel valued
· Staff have good professional development
  opportunities
· Excellent supervision is a priority
· Organizational structure provides possibility
  for promotion
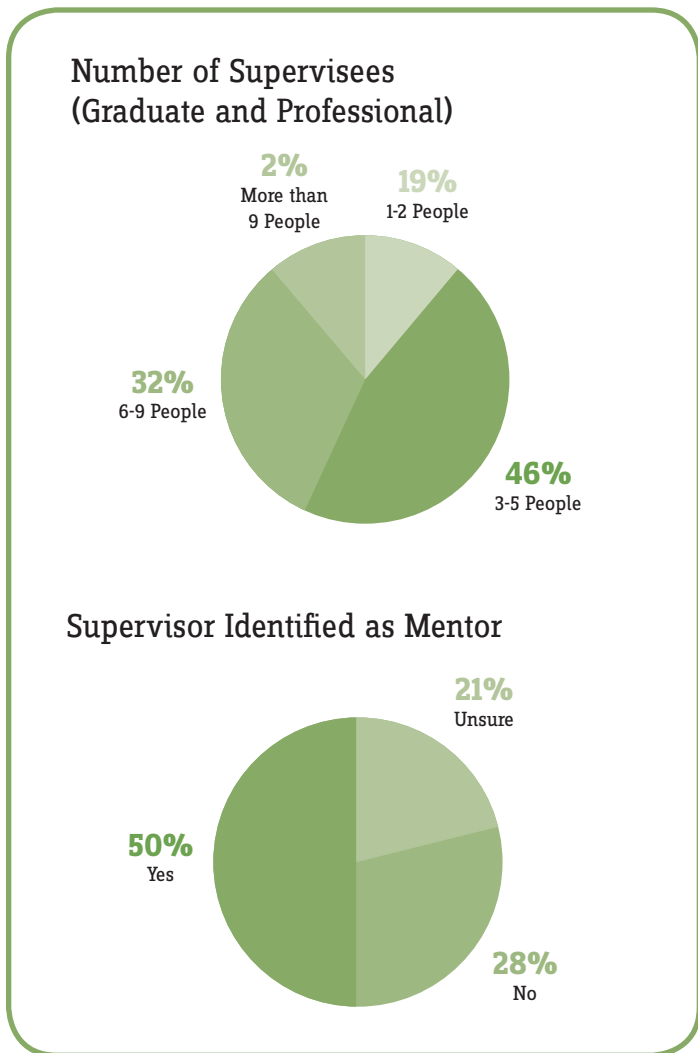· Staff are asked to stay

Several key factors for successful recruitment and retention of entry-level live-in staff were identified in the study. Not every institution utilized all of these strategies. Instead, these are representative of the strategies used to promote staff recruitment and retention.

4 Impact of Supervision and Mentorship

Tom Ellett, Stewart S. Robinette

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of supervision and mentorship in the field of housing and residence life, as well as how these factors may influence and shape the experiences of new professionals, which included three years or less of full-time experience. The instrument was a self-designed online survey that was pilot tested. The study concluded with 381 study participants: 59% were female and 43% were male and 2% chose not to identify. The majority of participants were 79% Caucasian, followed by 10% African-Americans, 5% non-citizens and multi-racial individuals, 3% Latino, and 1% Native Americans. Finally, 77% of respondents were employed at public institutions, 13% were employed at private, non-denominational institutions, and 10% worked at private, religious institutions.

Number of Supervisees (Graduate and Professional)

- 2% More than 9 People
- 19% 1-2 People
- 32% 6-9 People
- 46% 3-5 People

Supervisor Identified as Mentor

- 21% Unsure
- 50% Yes
- 28% No

Supervision

The survey revealed that males tend to be supervised more frequently by a male supervisor and females tend to be supervised more frequently by a female supervisor. Participants' ages, which ranged from 22 to 40, were ordered into the same categories used to capture supervisors' and mentors' ages; Under 30, 30-40, and Over 40. A t-test for the effect of match in age on rating of professional relationship with supervisor was significant; those with a match reported more satisfaction than those without a match.

The following were the most cited comments as about "components in your relationship with your primary supervisor that make the experience positive?"

1. Support offered, creating a supportive environment
2. Ability to communicate, candor, open communication and dialogue
3. Willingness to listen and/or listen to feedback approachability, availability
4. Mutual trust and confidence, mutual respect, willingness to challenge

The following were the most cited comments about "components in your relationship with your primary supervisor that make the experience negative?"

1. Nothing makes my experience negative with my supervisor
2. Supervisor having divided attention, being out of the office, hard to contact or delayed follow-up
3. Supervisor having a lack of leadership, being unsure of self or not being assertive enough
4. Inadequate constructive feedback or regular feedback, coaching, and professional development opportunities
5. Supervising being a micromanager or not allowing me to do my job

Based on these comments of positive and negative experiences with the supervisor and other research, it appears that many aspects of communication seem to have the ability to influence the perception of the relationship. Supervisees seem to seek a supervisory relationship that mirrors more of a friendship or mentorship relationship. Furthermore, supervisees are unable to critically analyze or name components that make the relationship negative when they view the relationship as positive.

Mentorship

Participants in the study were asked of those who had mentors, what is the highest educational level of their mentors. 67% of respondents have master degrees in higher education, 20% have master degrees in fields other than higher education., 13% hold bachelor degrees, and 3% have associate degrees. Participants were also asked to indicate their level of interaction with their mentors. Of the male respondents, 62 had male mentors, while 59 male respondents had female mentors. For the females, 112 respondents reported a female mentor, while only 34 females had male mentors. Participants of this study were asked if their current supervisor is their mentor. The majority of respondents (203) had a mentor who was not their current supervisor, while 51 respondents reported their current supervisor as a mentor.

For participants of the study who had mentors, 43% reported weekly or more interaction with their mentors, while 39% had interactions less than once a month. The most popular methods for communicating with a mentor was in person (43%), by e-mail (33%), and by phone (19%). Participants under the age of 30 (23 respondents), and participants over the age of 30 (63 respondents) met with their mentors more than once a week. Participants under the age of 30 (22 respondents) and participants over the age of 30 (157 respondents) met with their mentors less than once a week.

Recommendations
- Entry-level professionals appear confused about what constitutes mentorship; the same confusion appears true for entry-level professionals' view of good supervision. A discussion with supervisees/mentees about these topics could be useful in raising their job satisfaction.
- Expectations do not always align with the reality of the supervisory relationship.
- Entry-level professionals may think they have a mentorship relationship with someone who does not realize that the they are viewed as a mentor
- A system of helping entry-level professionals identify mentor characteristics, such as developing networks, sharing resources, should be designed for marginalized groups.
- There is a need for further studies on the impact of mentorship and supervision
- Best practices should be developed to better shape the perceptions of mentorship and supervision for entry-level professionals

Who mentors are, as identified by study participants
Total greater than 100% because respondents could choose more than one response

	Number	Percent
Former supervisor	110	41%
Friend	77	28%
Current primary supervisor	51	19%
Current or former colleague	51	19%
Current or former advisor	40	15%
Faculty from my higher ed. program	17	6%
Family member	12	4%
Assigned by my department	10	4%
Assigned at a conference	1	>1%

Characteristics of a mentor that respondents identified as being the most attractive

	Number	Percent
Knowledge	350	92%
Good Judgement	335	88%
Works with Others	325	85%
Personal Development	314	82%
Shares Personal Experience	311	82%
Information/Resources	310	81%
Initiative	253	66%
People-Oriented	241	63%
Shares Credit	236	62%
Network	205	54%
Risk-Taker	184	48%
Charismatic	165	43%
Influence	165	43%

⑤ Images of the Housing and Residence Life Profession

John Christopher, Sara Klein

The purpose of this study is to test image measures for the housing and residence life (HRL) profession and to identify the central features of HRL image among student leaders. A second purpose is to examine how housing and residence life image perceptions attract student leaders toward a career in the profession.

Image Defined
- Image beliefs are formed when individuals receive information and make judgments about their experience with the organization (Scott & Lane, 2000).
- They form from advertising, news reports, direct contact, and other interactions with an organization.
- They are a set of central, distinctive, and enduring perceptions specific to groups within an organization.

Career Decisions by Undergraduate Students
Sauermann (2004) proposed that attributes such as pay, social status, autonomy, rewards, and social interaction are used estimates for making decisions about potential occupations. Our study is concerned with the image student leaders have of HRL and its impact upon student choice to enter the HRL profession. Several studies in the student affairs literature suggest a relationship between image and career choice might exist.

- Brown (2004) reported that students found influential role models based on a desire to emulate certain personal qualities.
- Giannantonio and Hurley-Hanson (2006) reported that during the exploration stage of career development, individuals form occupational images based on contact with individuals in specific jobs and media provided by organizations.
- A recent study (Taub & McEwen, 2006) stated that graduate students in student affairs master's programs indicated that they entered the profession to work on a college campus as well as to seek personal fulfillment.

Methodology

Measures
- Brand Personality Scale (Aaker, 1997) contains descriptive words that measure five dimensions of personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness.
- Work Values Scale (Cable and Edwards, 2004) measures eight dimensions of employee work values: altruism, relationships, pay, prestige, security, authority, variety, and autonomy.

Sample
- We surveyed 1,864 undergraduate student leaders from 123 higher education institutions who attended the 2006 NACURH Conference. The 893 participants that completed the survey resulted in a 48% participation rate.

Results
- The Brand Personality and Work Values factors are reliable measures of image for the HRL profession.
- Characteristics of HRL such as relationships, altruism, and variety, were identified as central to the overall image of the profession, while sophistication and pay are factors that are most peripheral to the professional image
- Two of the Work Values factors, altruism and security, were significantly related to the intent to pursue a career in HRL.

Work Values Factors
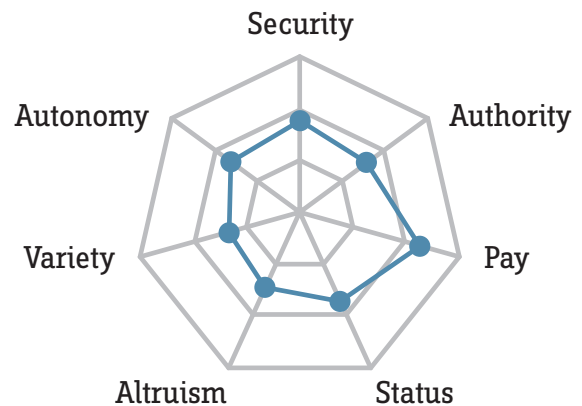
- None of the Brand Personality factors were significantly related to the intent to pursue a career in HRL

Brand Personality Factors

Sophisticated

Competent

Cheerful

Exciting

Sincerity

Contemporary
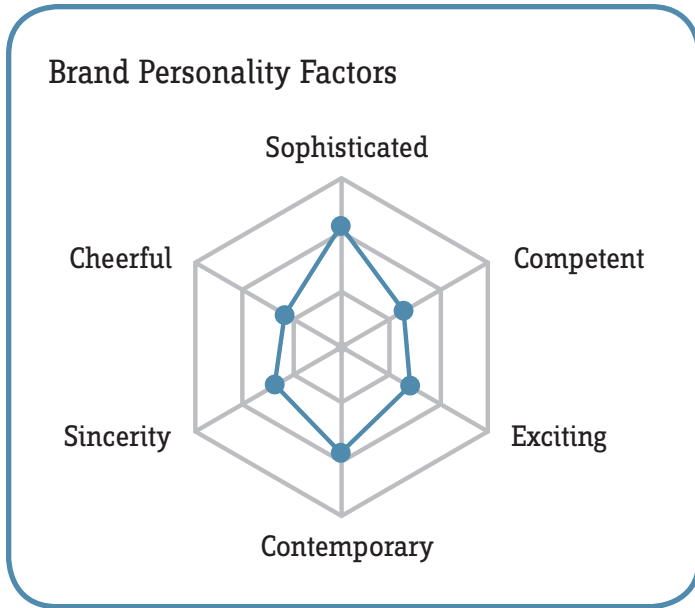
For Institutional Leadership
- At the institutional level, leaders could use the measures to confirm if the image's central and peripheral characteristics in this population exist
- Institutional leaders could use information regarding image characteristics to promote the positive characteristics of work in the HRL profession through communications, job fairs, and tours of the HRL department for student leaders and residents

For Further Research
- The measures used in this study could be used to develop an understanding of image perceptions held by graduate assistants, entry-level ,and senior employees. Since these groups have more exposure to HRL, it is important to test how HRL image differs from the student leader sample of this study.

Implications

The results of this study strongly suggest that HRL image is a measurable and useful concept. ACUHO-I and institutional leaders can initiate actions to develop an understanding and shape the image of the profession through communicating the desired characteristics of the HRL profession.

For the HRL Profession
- ACUHO-I and institutional leaders can initiate actions to develop an understanding and shape the image of the profession through communicating the desired characteristics of the HRL profession
- The finding that altruism is statistically related to the choice to pursue a career in HRL confirms a common assumption about the profession

The Role of Professional Development and Involvement in the Retention of Housing and Residence Life Staff

6

Tom Ellett, Holley Belch, and Sara Klein

The research team was interested in understanding more about the professional development experiences of middle managers in the residence life/housing profession. Specifically, the team inquired about the type of professional development activities engaged in, the perceived impact on skills/competencies and career decision-making, plans for new or continued involvement, and future career plans. Therefore, a quantitative study was designed to measure the experience mid-level professionals in residence life/housing at four-year institutions of higher education had with professional development. The instrument was a self-designed 42-item online survey that was pilot tested.

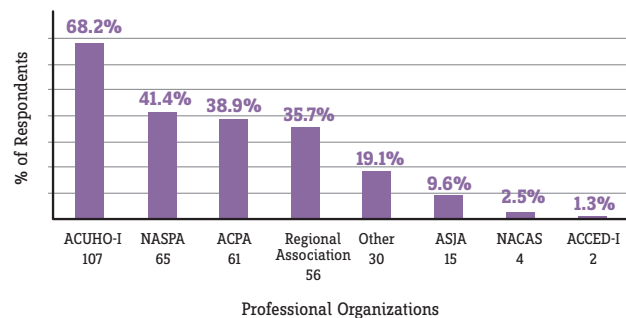### Memberships Held in Professional Organizations

Methods
The study was targeted for a U.S. sample and the following research methods were used:
- A stratified random sample of 240 mid-level professional representing all U.S. ACUHO-I regions;
- Sample criteria included the size of the institution's residential operation (small-less than 1000 beds, medium-1000 to 2500 beds, and large-more than 2501 beds);
- Three institutions in each size category per ACUHO-I region were included in the sample;
- A response rate of 69.5% (167 of 240);
- Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics, Chi-Square tests of significance, ANOVA, and correlations.

Respondent Profile
- In the survey, 77% of the institutions represented among the respondents were public; 13% private, religiously affiliated institutions and 10% were private, non-denominational;
- More than half (55%) of the respondents were female and 2% indicated transgender;
- The majority of respondents (70%) were from large (more than 2501 beds) institutions;
- Of the respondents, 79% were Caucasian; 10% African American; 3% Hispanic/Latino; 2% Asian; 1% American Indian; 5% Non-U.S. citizen/multiracial/other;
- Two-thirds (66%) hold master's degrees in higher education or a related field; 17% have master's degrees in other fields; 2.5% have earned a doctoral degree while 12% have a bachelor's degree;
- As part of their undergraduate experience, 73% of respondents had been a student employee, 67% a resident assistant, and 41% a participant in RHC/RHA.

Findings
Although no major statistical significance was found, there were interesting findings overall.
- Respondents indicated they were members of multiple professional organizations;
- Although 68% of respondents were members of ACUHO-I, only 26.8% considered it to be their primary professional development organization.

In addition, respondents offered interesting information about their plans for professional development, the expectations of others, and the support from the institution.
- Nearly half (49%) were introduced to the idea of professional development by a former supervisor;
- 86.5% reported that employers encouraged staff to participate in professional development activities;
- Less than a third (29.3%) reported having a written professional development plan and 40% of those who had a written plan wrote one because they personally believed it was a good idea, not because their employer required one;
- The range of institutional funds to support professional development varied greatly, yet more than half (53.7%) receive at least $800 for professional development activities;
- Participation by respondents in formal programs (e.g., NHTI) increased as the amount of institutional support increased (a statistically significant finding).

In addition to identifying sources of support for these activities, respondents offered perspective on the impact involvement in professional development activities had on their career.

- Nearly all (92%) claimed that involvement in professional development activities has improved their overall level of competence in their job;
- 82% were satisfied/very satisfied with their involvement in these activities;
- Respondents who indicated professional development activities had improved their overall competence were more likely to have attended a conference (statistically significant finding);
- Respondents were more likely to be involved at the regional rather than national level;
- A significant relationship existed among those attending an "in person conference" who believed involvement in professional development activities improved overall competence;
- A greater percentage of respondents who believed that involvement contributed to promotion said they had gained skills in leadership, networking, and had stronger management skills;
- The study found no statistical relationship between promotion and involvement in professional development activities.

Respondents shared information regarding their career plans for the next five years.

- Although 91% planned to be employed in higher education in the next five years, only 46% anticipate being employed in housing/residence life;
- 41% claimed they plan to leave housing/residence life within the next five years.

Conclusion

While the findings were a snapshot into the world of professional development involvement, the study indicated that the role of professional development is significant for professionals influenced by their supervisors to participate in this level of activity for their personal growth. While many institutions encourage their staff to participate, it may well be worthwhile to create a plan for professional development (as noted by 29.3% of the participants). The vast majority of

Professional Development Funding
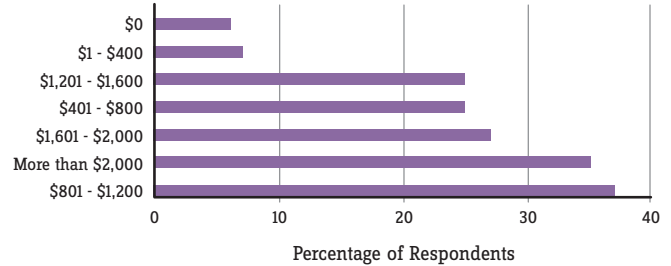
respondents noted that their competence has improved (92%) due to their involvement in a professional development activity, which most noted as attendance at annual conferences.

Based on the findings, we have learned that there will continue to be a large turnover in the field of housing and residence life and as a profession; we will need to cultivate new people. Currently more than half of the respondents believe they will not remain in the field. Examining the issue of "burnout" more closely as well as the reasons that people leave the field may be helpful and could be addressed through professional development opportunities. Additionally, as technology options for professional development increase, it will be important to determine if they make an impact on the level of participation.

Future Inquiry

The results of this study offer insight regarding the professional development experiences of mid-level residence life and housing professionals. These results lead the researchers to offer questions for further inquiry in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Specifically:

- What purpose does professional development serve?
- What meaning does professional development have to mid-managers?
- What role should senior housing officers play in framing the professional development experience for their staff?
- Is there a "better" professional development option in which to participate?

Summary

This study attempted to look at multiple constituencies including the senior housing officer (SHO), mid-level manager (supervisors), entry-level staff, and undergraduate students who may be interested in this field based on their leadership experience in housing and residence life (resident assistant, student worker, and member of a hall council or residence hall association) to identify their perspectives and insights into the issues of recruitment and retention.

Throughout the research it was clear that no singular response will result in an increase of new candidates, nor will it address issues related to retaining our brightest and best. We are in a turbulent, yet exciting world where opportunity and change abounds. Societal issues (environmental, fiscal, and diversity) will continue to challenge each of us, and we know we will need talented young professionals to provide connections and services for the next generation of college students. The studies asked questions that generated more questions, which good research questions should do. In the end, it will be incumbent on the next generation of residence life and housing professionals to understand the remuneration package, quality of life benefits, and training engagements that will allow for growth and development of staff.

We should always be thinking of ways to tell the story of how residence life and housing professionals make significant contributions to the holistic development of the college experience. Future research should continue to focus on the differences between our member institutional categories, such as public vs. private, small vs. large, and urban vs. rural. Additionally, looking at how intentionality plays a role in personal/professional development plans, the models of successful mentorship and supervision, and how our student leader opportunities can position our field to increase the ranks of young students learning about our field before they leave our institutions.

We all have a responsibility to "return" to our field the number of staff we "take" into our full-time positions at our respective campuses. If you haven't thought about how you can contribute, we challenge you to do so. Today, and every day is a perfect time to recruit a student leader into the field, while simultaneously, identifying intentional ways to keep talented staff in the profession. Together, we all can improve the future of the residence life and housing profession!

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ACUHO-I Commissioned Research Programs

Kathy Hobgood, ACUHO-I Executive Board Publications Coordinator

Members of the Association of College and University Housing Officers –International are committed to the development of exceptional residential experiences at colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions around the world. ACUHO-I achieves its vision by providing innovative, value-driven programs, services, research, and development as well as networking opportunities that help support and evolve the collegiate housing profession.

Along with conferences, publications, and online resources, ACUHO-I furthers the profession by supporting and generating original research into the foremost issues. Such efforts are generated by the ACUHO-I Commissioned Research Committee. For this particular project, beginning more than four years ago,a dedicated team of researchers have been working to address, in a scholarly method, the issue of recruitment and retention within entry-level housing positions. Through six individual studies, the team studied the issues of:

· the nature of the problem (retention and recruitment)
· providing an analysis of the essential aspects of and attitudes about the entry-level position
· identification of best practices
· reviewing appropriate supervision and mentorship models
· analyzing the current image of the entry-level position
· continuing the development of a career model.

ACUHO-I is committed to research that drives the college housing profession to reach new heights. That commitment takes the form of projects led by our members as well as projects funded by the association. This project was initially proposed

through a Commissioned Research Grant funded by the ACUHO-I Foundation. Formed in 1988, the Foundation seeks to provide a way for individuals, institutions, corporations, government agencies, and other foundations to support the collegiate housing profession through gifts and grants. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised more than $1 million used to fund commissioned research, study tours, conference speakers, institutes, and scholarships. The publication you hold in your hands is a tangible example of your membership and Foundation donation dollars at work.

This partnership between association members, as researchers, and the Foundation, as a funding source has provided a best practice model moving ahead. The project team worked in a dedicated fashion and has increased the available body of knowledge several-fold in the process. Though they are recognized individually within these pages, it is our hope that you will call upon them to continue this important conversation by presenting and publishing their results, and those of future studies.

For further information about ACUHO-I, the ACUHO-I Foundation, and commissioned research projects, please visit our Web site at *www.acuho-i.org*.

ACUHO-I is the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International. ACUHO-I members believe in developing exceptional residential experiences at colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions around the world.

ACUHO-I achieves its vision by providing innovative, value-driven programs, services, research, and development as well as networking opportunities that help support and evolve the collegiate housing industry. We do this with the constant purpose of making a positive difference in the lives of members and those they serve.

Our members include more than 6,400 housing professionals from more than 900 colleges and universities in 22 countries, who serve approximately 1.8 million students worldwide. Our membership also includes more than 200 corporate members. To meet the needs of all students, we encourage participation at all levels of the association.

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The ACUHO-I Foundation was formed in 1988 to provide a way for individuals, institutions, corporations, government agencies, and other foundations to support the collegiate housing profession through gifts and grants. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised more than $1 million to fund commissioned research, study tours, conference speakers, institutes, and scholarships.

Our members recognize that the innovation, connection, and education they receive from ACUHO-I truly matters. That's why they have chosen to invest their time and their funds into the ACUHO-I Foundation and, in turn, invest in our future.