Mission: A diverse community of students, staff, and faculty who foster student success in living-learning environments by building relationships, promoting engagement, and leading with an ethic of care.

Resident Assistant Position Description

Academic Year: 2013-2014
(Cougar Place, Cougar Village 1 & 2, Moody Towers, Quadrangle)

The RA leadership role can be a remarkable life-changing experience. This position as a student affairs educator has tremendous rewards in the form of skills, knowledge, experience, lifelong friendships, and a true ability to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Although you will be challenged in terms of your patience, time management, organization, academics, boundaries, and personal relationships, many student staff members have felt this opportunity was completely worth the time and energy invested.

In general, Resident Assistant (RAs) provide support that assists students in achieving personal, social, and academic goals, as well as helping them to develop skills essential to productive citizenry. In addition, RAs have the unique opportunity to build community through being accessible, providing an array of social, educational, and recreational activities, encouraging resident interaction, and being a role model as an interested and active member of the UH community. Because RAs are students first, their academics are paramount, followed closely by the RA position. Extracurricular activities, leadership roles, and employment must be approved by an RA’s supervisor to ensure all Student Housing and Residence Life staff maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle. In general, the RA position is a 20-hour per week commitment, with time periods that may or may not exceed this average.

The UH student encounters many complex living issues due to our unique residence hall, suite-style, and apartment living arrangements. Issues often revolve around the use and maintenance of shared apartment or residence hall room space, alcohol and other drug usage, noise levels, cooking and cleaning styles, and personal schedules. RAs who share Student Housing and Residential Life commitment, passion, and dedication to the following values will not only be successful relationship and community builders, but will experience tremendous benefits as a leader, role model, friend, student, peer, and colleague:

A. Building relationships with residents and between residents. An RAs primary goal is as a community builder, knowing their residents and helping them to get to know each other. Network them, support them, teach them, laugh with them, cry with them, learn with them, and grow with them. This is the heart of what Student Housing and Residential Life student affairs educators do.

B. Nurture student success & satisfaction. RAs facilitate discussions, activities, and events that promote academic progress and achievement, in addition to supporting and assisting residents with critical thinking and problem solving skills. As leaders at UH, upholding community standards to the best of an RAs ability is critical, being sure to address issues and concerns in timely manner. Our goal is to make living on campus be the best experience possible.

C. An ethic of care. Our staff react quickly and appropriately to issues and concerns. Students, parents, faculty, and staff feel heard, valued, and cared about when we work with them.
Expectations of this Leadership Position

Under the supervision of a Residence Life Coordinator (RLC), Resident Assistants serve as liaisons between Student Housing and Residential Life and residents. The following sections outline what Student Housing and Residential Life expects of Resident Assistants, as well as what our student staff can expect from us as a department. Each section has a designated space where you will indicate your understanding of what is listed in that area by signing your initials once offered the position. As you read through this position description and agreement, please make note of any questions you may have and be sure to gain clarification, if needed, from an Residence Life Coordinator prior to signing.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

• Must be a student at UH working towards a degree. All undergraduates must be enrolled and attending classes with a minimum of 12 units per semester for the period of the appointment. Your direct supervisor must approve more than 18 units per semester. Graduate students must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 units per semester, and must obtain approval for more than 12 units for the period of appointment.

• Good academic standing at UH must be demonstrated upon application and maintained throughout the appointment. This means that Resident Assistants must have, and maintain, at the beginning and throughout the appointment, the following:
  o A cumulative grade point average of 2.5.
  o A semester grade point average of 2.5.
  o Have passed at least 12 units (or 6 graduate units) the semester prior to, and each semester throughout the appointment (academic work during Summer sessions do not count towards Fall or Spring GPA or credits earned, but may impact Cumulative GPA).

• Failure to maintain these academic requirements will result in academic probation and/or early termination from the position.
  o New RAs failing to meet all criteria (semester and cumulative GPA; passed units) by the start of employment could result in termination prior to the appointment start date.
  o If an RA currently on staff or returning to staff is missing one of these three ‘good standing’ criteria, it will result in academic probation for one semester. After which, if all three criteria are not met, the RAs position will be terminated.
  o If an RA currently on staff or returning to staff is missing two or more of these criteria at the end of an academic semester, it will result in the position being terminated, and that individual will not be eligible to apply for the position until all three criteria are met.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

• Approachability – demonstrated ability to be friendly, open, and maintain a positive, helpful attitude when interacting with others.
• Strong verbal and written communication skills.
• Awareness of university and Student Housing and Residential Life policies and procedures, as well as their importance to maintaining a safe, secure, and educationally focused living environment.
• Knowledge of, and ability to work with, diverse individuals and groups.
• Demonstrated commitment to UH Vision Statement and ability to contribute to its implementation within Student Housing and Residential Life.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

• Experience in leading peers and/or serving as a positive role model.
• Ability to establish and maintain cooperative working relationships.
• Ability to effectively mediate in problem situations.
• Willingness to experience new and different opportunities, as well as being open to learn new skills
• Ability to be flexible in unclear and ambiguous situations
POSITION REQUIREMENTS

• Have at least one (1) completed semester of on-campus living experience (or other approved "similar experience") prior to the employment start date.
• RA appointments are made for one academic year – early August (up to 2 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester) to late May. Re-appointment to the position is not guaranteed and is based upon performance throughout the appointment period. Incumbents interested in returning must be recommended for re-appointment by their supervisor.
• RAs are required to complete a background check prior to the start of employment.
  o Results of the background check will be reviewed, and may prompt a review of the candidate’s appropriateness for the position, or cause the revocation of the RA position offer.
  o All students must complete a criminal background check.
    ▪ The criminal background check form requires general personal information as well as all previous U.S. addresses since the age of 17. The form is all that is needed. The form then goes to HR, then to UHPD for the background check, which usually takes 1-2 weeks, depending on whether or not they’re a resident of Texas.
    ▪ Failure to pass the CHRI process will result in immediate termination of the individual from any security sensitive position.
• Selected Fall staff are not to take any UH Session IV summer school classes or external courses that would interfere with Fall RA Training. Failure to complete all or part of Fall or Spring training sessions will be cause for employment review and probable termination.
• In compliance with the University of Houston’s employment policy, each Resident Assistant is on probation for the first six weeks of each semester of employment.
• All Resident Assistants must also sign a housing agreement.
• Must be available via phone and UH e-mail daily throughout the period of the appointment. E-mail, phone voicemail, and staff mailbox must be checked daily. RAs are provided a departmental issued analog phone and are responsible for setting up, maintaining, and checking voicemail. RA’s UH e-mail addresses will be published and made available to the residents enabling them to contact RAs when necessary. Additionally, RAs private phone numbers will be made available to only Student Housing and Residential Life staff for emergency purposes.
• RAs are responsible for reading and understanding the RA manual, University of Houston policies, Student Housing and Residence Life policies and procedures, and any additional assigned literature, in addition to seeking clarification when necessary. It is better to ask questions to gain a better understanding, than to guess an answer and potentially lead someone astray.
• RAs are responsible for completing required training offered through Human Resources beginning in October. Failure to complete this training by the deadline may result in position termination.
• Must be in “Good Standing” with Student housing and Residence Life and the University (Conduct and Judicial Status, as well as financially and academically). As a role model and student affairs educator, it is critical to uphold and adhere to all University policies, including the Student Code of Conduct, and Student Housing and Residential Life policies and procedures, realizing the impact on the community and staff when these standards are violated.
• RA rooms are assigned specifically to meet the needs of the community. An RA is assigned an entire room. In the event that the RA contract is terminated, voluntarily or otherwise, the RA will be required to move into another room/suite/apartment outside of their area/complex.
• Available to be on duty during Thanksgiving and Spring Break periods.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

• It is expected RAs walk their communities on a daily basis to connect with residents, check for safety issues, and assesses/report facilities concerns. Building relationships and community is the primary job focus for RAs. As such, it is also expected that RAs spend the majority nights while on campus in their assigned room and available to their residents.
• The following categories list the areas is which many of the RA job expectations will fall under. They are also followed by things in which students should expect to learn as a result of being an RA.
• In general, as a result of being an RA, students will learn to:
- Serve as a role model by being involved in the campus community, following community standards, excelling at job responsibilities, supporting team efforts, bringing forth new ideas, upholding UH's mission and excelling academically.
- Articulate and support the mission of the Department through actions and words.
- Demonstrate respect for students, parents, families, campus partners, and other Residential Life & Housing staff members.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Student Housing and Residence Life programs and services, as well as all campus resources available to UH students.
- Demonstrate their ability to maintain a good work/life balance by balancing school, personal, and RA responsibilities.

### The Resident Assistant Commitment to Confidentiality

- Student Housing and Residential Life is dedicated to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of our staff and residents. This includes refraining from gossip or negative comments about others.
- No personal information (including, but not limited to identity, assignment, address, contact information, conduct history, financial records, etc.) shall be revealed, unless that individual provides written documentation authorizing the disclosure of that information.
- When an individual waives confidentiality, staff or student members must exercise utmost caution not to exceed the parameters of the waiver. Any doubt regarding disclosure must always be resolved in favor of confidentiality.
- Any breach of confidentiality is a serious matter and may be cause for removal as a staff member from Student Housing and Residence Life.

### Community Development

- Learn the names of all assigned residents.
- Demonstrate approachability, availability, and visibility in an effort to enhance community development and support student success.
- Maintain an “open door” policy in order to see and interact with residents.
- Supports the programming efforts sponsored by student clubs and organizations (including, but not limited to Faculty in Residence, Student Government Association, RHA, etc.) and campus partners.
- Maintain and regularly update (based on dates provided by your supervisor) bulletin board(s) located in your community with educational, social, and/or informational resources.
- Actively participates and encourages community participation in Student Housing and Residence Life and university programs and activities.
- RAs on duty over break periods and ‘long weekends’ may be expected to coordinate programs for students remaining on campus.
- Mediate conflict between community members.
- Students will create an inclusive environment for their residents that support social awareness and fosters diversity.
- Serve as a resource and referral agent, identifying potential problems (i.e. alcohol/substance abuse/dependence, psychological distress, date/acquaintance rape, etc.), informing their direct supervisor or AC on Duty, directing student(s) to appropriate resources, and documenting situation.
- As a result of being an RA students will learn to:
  - Articulate strategies that help them get to know all of their residents.
  - Construct everyday opportunities to advance their relationships with residents.
  - Develop ways to connect residents to one another and the greater campus community.
  - Mediate roommate conflicts to ensure mutually beneficial solutions.
  - Organize floor events to support community development and student success.

### Safety and Security

- Serve as a role model, especially in reference to University of Houston policies as listed in the Code of Conduct available on the Dean of Students website.
• All documentation of incidents and/or resident/guest behavior must be submitted within 24 hours or by 8am the next business day, whichever is sooner.

• Maintain confidentiality while working with community members (RAs MUST report life threatening situations, sexual assault/abuse, alleged policy violations, and any potentially dangerous situations to their direct supervisor or RLC on Duty immediately).

• Interprets and explains Community Standards to residents, including rationale and background, helping residents understand the impact negative behavior can have on a community.

• RAs are required to participate on a rotating duty schedule that begins prior to the opening of campus and continues daily through the closing of campus (from August through May) – including Thanksgiving and Spring Break. Duty schedules will vary according to the residential community; however, all RAs are expected to remain on campus (days and nights) the majority of the semester, with extended leave requests approved by their supervisor. All RAs are on call as required.

• RAs must remain on campus until all students have left for a vacation period and be back on campus when classes resume after a vacation period. Permission to leave early or return late must be approved by an RAs direct supervisor.

• Major campus/community special events (including, but not limited to Cougar Preview, Frontier Fiesta, Family Weekend, Fall Break, Spring Break, etc.) may require RAs to perform ’extra’ duty coverage.

• When on duty, RAs may be expected to conduct frequent ‘Fire Walks’ if emergency systems fail temporarily, serve as resources at UH sponsored events, or conduct community programming.

• Initially respond to any alleged violation of university policy, document situations, inform RLC on Duty or supervisor immediately, and provide follow up with residents involved.

• RAs will be prepared to deal with behavioral problems and emergencies with the support of professional staff as outlined in training.

• As a result of being an RA, students will learn to:
  o Respond to incidents in line with departmental protocol.
  o Respond appropriately to crisis situations.
  o Complete incident reports concisely and accurately.
  o Describe several ways to follow up with residents after an incident.
  o Articulate and enforce community standards.

Administrative

• Assist with fall and spring openings (Move-in/Check-in), Check-Out activities, room/suite/apartment inspections, and end of semester closing events.

• Report regularly on an informal basis and bi-weekly in writing to their supervisor (pending supervisory discretion) on community happenings and concerns.

• Participate and assist in coordinating assessment activities, including staff evaluations, community assessment instruments, and surveys administered by campus partners.

• Attends weekly staff meetings and in-services held Wednesdays at 9pm

• Attends regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with supervisor.

• RAs must receive approval at least 24 hours in advance from their direct supervisor if they cannot attend meetings in order to make other arrangements of assigned tasks.

• Participate on one of several building-specific or department-wide committees, working approximately 2-3 hours a week (on average) to accomplish committee goals and projects – ‘work’ may be completed during meetings or as ‘homework.’
  • Realize some weeks may be more work than others and each committee will be different
  • Attendance – RAs should be attending every meeting, unless previous approval is received from committee advisor/Chair (not supervisor)
  • Committee members are responsible for sharing regular updates and seeking feedback during staff meetings on committee projects
  • It is the goal of Student Housing and Residence Life for committee responsibilities to help further develop RAs knowledge and skills in various areas –while the projects committees are working on are important to residents and the department, this work is more about the process than the product.

• Check RA mailbox, email (address provided to supervisor), and voicemail (if applicable) daily.
• Report any resident and facilities concerns to their supervisor, conducting follow-up as needed.
• RAs may be issued access to a staff office key during the term of their position.

**Keys and Building Security**

- Keywatcher is an automated key filing and tracking system that allows staff members to access keys by code and fingerprint – RAs are issued a unique identifier to access keys in Keywatcher. As a Student Housing and Residential Life student staff educator, RAs are trusted with key access to multiple rooms within the building to which they are assigned. It is critical all staff are aware of, and agree to, the following:
  - RAs will maintain possession of the checked out key(s) at all times
  - Keys need to be returned immediately after use
  - If a key(s) is lost, the responsible RA will incur all necessary expenses
  - When no longer an RA, key access will be deactivated immediately

• Distribute campus handouts/flyers and department materials in a timely manner.
• Complete all paperwork and assignments within the expected timeline as outlined by the Residence Life Coordinator. Mandatory administrative tasks include, but are not limited to: Bi-weekly reports, occupancy reports, Room Condition Reports (RCRs), Incident Reports (IRs), etc.
• Completes other administrative tasks as assigned.
• As a result of being an RA students will learn to:
  - Explain the importance of completing administrative paperwork in a timely and complete manner.
  - Complete Room Condition Reports and Occupancy Reports with accuracy.
  - Create monthly bulletin boards that support student success.
  - Articulate the role of RAs in maintaining key security.
  - Describe the benefits of serving on a building-specific or departmental committee.

**Commitments beyond the Position**

Your direct supervisor must approve any outside commitments, including pre-existing or new employment and/or leadership opportunities (beyond the expected 20 hours/week expectation when you are directly interacting with residents). This is in place because these ‘outside hours’ have been demonstrated to interfere with an RAs ability to be a successful staff member. This includes the following limitations:

• Due to its focus on relationships and customer service within your building, you may work up to 20 hours per week at the service desk (it is likely you will be scheduled less than 20 hours). This is a separate position called “Desk Assistant,” paid hourly, and supervised by the Customer Service Representative of that building/area.
• If choosing to work outside our residential communities (not at a service desk), you may work up to 10 hours per week.
  - If choosing to work inside and outside our residential communities, you may work up to 10 hours outside the residence halls and up to 10 hours as a Desk Assistant.
• To honor academic commitments, if you are participating in a for-credit internship, practicum, student teaching, etc, you may ‘work’ up to 20 hours per week (internship and any employment hours must be equal to or less than 20 hours per week).

The goal of this component of the position description is to allow RAs to participate in academic for-credit opportunities, on and off-campus employment (outside the residence halls), or to work as a Desk Assistant in our residential communities for a collective total of **no more than 20 hours a week**. For example, you could work 4 hours as a DA, the CRWC for 10 hours, and have an internship for 6 hours every week. RAs will submit their schedule of classes and other commitments outside of the position to their supervisor one week before classes begin each semester. As a reminder, University of Houston students can not work more than 20 hours per week during Fall and Spring semesters.

Note: Pending an RAs performance, their supervisor may limit any of the above hours (DA, on or off-campus employment, and/or for-credit opportunities) until the staff member’s performance improves.
Required Events

- Fully participate in the Fall and Spring RA training programs/sessions.
  - Fall Training begins August 5th, 2013, lasts until the first day of classes, and generally goes from 8am-7pm daily, with days that may be longer or shorter.
  - Spring Training is typically the 1st week prior to school staring in January (tentatively Monday Jan 6th, 2014)
- Assists in the selection of the 2014-2015 RA Staff.
  - The Group Selection Process is one-3 full days in mid-February 2014 (committee will choose dates)
  - Individual RA interviews will occur over two weeks in early February 2014 (subject to change based upon applicant numbers).
- Prepare, advertise for, and lead, floor/community meetings (at minimum a few per semester.)
- All RA’s are also required to work/attend the following events. Dates will be provided by the end of training each semester.
  - Frontier Fiesta
  - Family Weekend
  - Cougar Preview
  - Welcome Week

EVALUATION

Formal evaluations are conducted bi-yearly by the RA's direct supervisor with input from students, other RA’s, and Student Housing and Residence Life student affairs educators. Performance while serving as a Student Housing and Residential Life student staff educator will be used to determine eligibility to be rehired for the following year.

COMPENSATION

This position is contracted through Student Housing and Residential Life with the following compensation:

- RAs are provided one single room space for the duration of appointment (space to be assigned based upon community needs)
  - It is expected RAs live in their assigned space throughout the duration of the position.
- Resident Assistants shall receive a compensation package that includes a single room and a meal plan. Board is available only when cafeteria facilities are open to residents.
  - Meal Plan – Staff members are provided a meal plan and are expected to use this plan during the course of an academic semester to build relationships with residents who live in their community.
  - NOTE: Compensation in the form of housing and board is excluded from income subject to taxes as long as your position requires you live on the premises, housing is furnished for the convenience of the university and for a substantial non-compensatory business reason, and it is a condition of employment necessitated by the proper performance of duties (SAMs 03.D.06).
- All RAs (excluding Calhoun Lofts) will be issued a phone (land line) to be used throughout the duration of employment and must be returned when employment ends.
- When on-campus dining options are closed (for the entire day), Student Housing and Residential Life staff will provide food and/or remuneration for RAs on Duty.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

- Upon termination of the position, all necessary paperwork must be completed.
- If an RA chooses to resign, they will write a letter of resignation and give it to their supervisor.
- Failure to follow this document, the requirements or the direction of an RA’s supervisor will result in disciplinary action up to and including early termination.
- Should an RAs position be terminated (by the department or RA) prior to the end of the period of employment, that individual will be relocated at their expense to another location outside of the staff area for which they were on duty for and rent will be pro-rated.
- Any Resident Assistant can be terminated for violation of University of Houston or Student Housing and Residence Life policy or public law at any time deemed necessary.
It is the RAs responsibility to meet with their direct supervisor to determine an appropriate housing reassignment and to schedule an appointment to return RA supplies/materials and check out of their current assignment.

RAs also are financially responsible for any unreturned items and, if applicable, an improper check out fee – charges will be posted to the students account.

If an RA is removed from their position, they have an opportunity to appeal the decision in writing within three business days from termination. Appeals can be submitted to the Associate Director of Student Housing and Residence Life.

Resident Assistants who resign or are terminated from the position are subject to penalties associated with the departmental purchase of a meal plan. Meal plans are non-transferable, as such, resignation or termination of the position may result in the former employee being charged the remaining pro-rated amount of their meal plan. In the case that a former employee resigns or is terminated from the position and chooses to live off campus, the former employee may be subject to normal housing penalties associated with breaking the housing agreement.

Prior to signing, please reflect on the following quote about the RA position:

“This is the best job you can possibly have as an undergraduate. It will teach you what your strengths and weaknesses are and reveal to you how selfish you can occasionally be. It will test your relationships with significant others and put at least a temporary strain on your academics. You will experience here-to-now undreamed of levels of stress and you will live under the careful scrutiny of critics who observe and comment upon each action you undertake. You will observe the best and worst of human personhood. You will want to quit, some will, but for those of you who stick it out and focus on serving their fellow students . . . you will be rewarded with the greatest experience of all. You will earn the trust of your peers, be of value to others, and learn how to function in community and society. This has a steep price tag and I urge you to consider the cost of the meal before you sit down to the table.”

– Will Keim, former RA, ‘Residence Life Coordinator,’ and current student affairs educator.

The information below indicates basic responsibilities and expectations of all Resident Assistants at The University of Houston. Upon selection, you will be asked to sign an agreement stating you understand and agree to these items.

- I understand the RA position begins on Monday, August 5th, 2013 and automatically terminates on May 31, 2014.
- I accept the duties of the position and will perform them as outlined.
- I agree to accept additional duties as directed in training or meetings or by my direct supervisor, not explicitly listed in this document.
- If I have any individual needs or accommodations that would restrict me from performing any part of the RA duties, I have already requested these needs in writing with my direct supervisor for next year. I understand RA duties do require some physical work that would include climbing up to flights of stairs, walking between buildings, and lifting objects.
- I understand that as an RA, I may be moved or reassigned to another residence hall at the discretion of the Residence Life Coordinator.