

# Taking You and Me and Making a We: Building Staff Team Dynamics and Developing Relationships Within the Residence Life Leadership Team

## Introduction of Facilitators

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## SPU's Model

- As educators, we seek to provide a living-learning environment that encourages educational excellence and personal growth. We are committed to the following:
  - Provide a residential community founded on Christian faith and values.
  - Provide residential housing facilities that are safe and welcoming.
  - Train and supervise student leaders.
  - Offer co-curricular programming according to student developmental needs.
  - Operate a fair and just disciplinary process.
  - Advise residence hall councils.

## Information on SPU

- Private Christian University
- Located just outside downtown Seattle
- Urban campus
- 3,000 Undergraduate
- Graduate, Post-Baccalaureate 1,000

## Key to Terms

- Student Staff
  - Peer Advisor (PA)
  - Resident Advisor (RA)
  - Hall Coordinator
  - Etcetera
- Professional Staff
  - Residence Life Coordinator (RLC)
  - Resident Director (RD)
  - Area Coordinator
  - Hall Director

## Overview

- What are some specific ways that PA staffs can become a cohesive team that is learning to work together for group success?
- What are some specific ways that supervisors can personally connect with their PAs to foster authentic and encouraging relationships within the staff along with facilitating individual growth and development?

## Ground Rules

- Be open to other ideas
- Maintain an atmosphere of positivity and hopefulness, even in challenging situations. We are here to help one another and build one another up with our ideas and thoughts.

## How Does This Look Practically?

- **Break into small groups to discuss:**
  - Staff team dynamics and relationships
  - PA, supervisor relationships
- **Based On:**
  - Quotes of former SPU Peer Advisors

We cannot facilitate this kind of growth without cohesiveness among the PA staff team.

“Being on a staff team has taught me about being in a team, connected, on the same page, supportive, invested. Any time you go through something hard with other people, you connect to them and you grow together. Life isn’t just about me getting through it, and partners aren’t just for helping me do that – when you meld with a team, you do it *for* them, that friendship in itself is worth it.”

## Discussion Questions

- What are some ways that you build into your staff team and how are they becoming a support network for one another?
- What are some ways you could change? Sometimes this means giving your PA more room, and sometimes it means being more involved in their lives.
- What are some pros/cons of mentoring vs supervisory roles with your PAs?

“Leadership can be lonely.”

## Discussion Questions

- Do you sense that your PAs feel lonely? What are the positive and negative implications of loneliness in leadership?
- How can staffs provide support for each other?

PA staff teams are greatly influenced by the relationships they have with their RLC

“My supervision as a PA was one of the most unique experiences I have had in a job thus far. My supervisor and I met once a week for an hour at a time. Through an hour of intentional “get to know you time,” my supervisor became more of a friend than a boss. It was also something that I looked forward to weekly, because I knew that it was someone who could understand what I was going through, but also someone who could offer more wisdom in certain situations than I could see myself.”

## Discussion Questions

- How can the time of one-on-one interactions with your PAs be something they look forward to and that does not add additional stress to their lives?
- What are some ways you can connect with your staff members outside of your one-on-one supervision time in order to build that relationship?

“I always felt very emotionally supported. Being the leader of 40 young [people] is demanding work, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Weekly meeting with my advisor and with my staff proved to be the right tonic. Our group related well even though we were all very different in our interests and personalities. I found myself affirmed and challenged by my advisor. He spoke truth into my life by being blunt when needed or holding back when he could see me processing.”

## Discussion Questions

- How can RLCs facilitate an environment that makes PA/RAs feel supported in every aspect of life—emotionally, physically, spiritually?
- What are some ways you get to know the people on your staff so that you can recognize their needs or relational style? (personality tests, etc)

## Full Group Discussion

- What does your institution do with excellence in regards to staff development?
- In an ideal world, what would professional and para-professional staff relationships look like?

## One Last Question

- In an ideal world, what would professional and para-professional staff relationships look like?

## Question/Answer Time

Thank you for coming!