

## **THE ROLES OF THE RA**

You have probably heard the expression "overworked and underpaid" many times. If it ever applied, it applies to a Resident Assistant, or an RA, as this person is commonly known. If you are now at the stage where you are only contemplating becoming an RA, primarily because of the financial assistance it may offer, the job simply does not pay enough. You can earn more money and spend much less time doing any number of part-time jobs in college.

What is perhaps more important is that an RA's experience in college is uniquely different from that of other students. You need to consider this very carefully. As an RA, you will not always be a part of the group activities in the section/house. Some students in your section/house may exclude you from their groups, not because of you personally, but because of your role as an authority figure. Some residents may generalize your role to that of just a policy enforcer. You may be intentionally left out of some group discussions and often not invited to share in the "inside information." Many duties within the building will be asked of you, some of which will no doubt require you to reorder your personal priorities. You will be among the first students back to school in the fall of the year and among the last to leave in the spring. The same will be true of each vacation period.

Great demands by other students and by the student services staff will be placed on both your personal time and study time. Responsibilities of your will occasionally have to take priority over cocurriculars you want to involve yourself in. Even the dynamics of your social life may be somewhat defined by the need of your residents. All these demands, requirements, and expectations you assume when you accept the responsibility of a resident assistant. It is not an easy job. Think very carefully before you accept it.

Though the responsibilities are very great and the demand that will be placed upon you throughout the academic year may be even greater, you will also benefit tremendously from this experience. The RA fills a unique role as a teacher and a leader that few students are privileged to experience. No other groups on campus receive the training, assistance, and attention that you will as a resident assistant. This is a great opportunity to grow, to learn, and to experience responsibility in a working situation.

### **Some Expectations of the RA**

From campus to campus the responsibilities of the RA vary. Below are listed some common ones shared by most resident assistants on campuses throughout the country:<sup>1</sup>

#### **Administrative Details**

1. Prepares necessary reports and records.
2. Assists with public relations by being able to explain residence hall programs and staff duties to faculty, guests, parents, and students.
3. Assists with room checks as required by hall operation.
4. Assists with communication among staff members, students, and residence programs.
5. Keeps Resident Directors informed of major plans developed by students.
6. Maintains a good liaison relation with custodial personnel.
7. Makes rounds when on duty.

#### **Helping to Provide Control**

1. Sets an example by adhering to rules and regulations of the College.
2. Knows the College and residence hall regulations.
3. Knows the rationale for given College rules and regulations.
4. Assists students in knowing what is expected of them.

5. Explains the reasons for given rules and regulations.
6. Encourages students to confront other students with violations.
7. Assists in individual growth toward accountability.
8. Knows and interprets College philosophy of discipline.
9. Reports behavioral infractions according to determined policies.
10. Supports or does not openly disagree with College regulations.

### **Helping to Establish a Healthy Residence Hall Environment**

1. Helps students develop a respect for each other's' rights and freedoms.
2. Helps students develop a respect for private and College property.
3. Encourages residents to attend residence hall and College programs.
4. Encourages faculty to visit his/her section or hall to talk informally with students.
5. Knows and communicates well with the residents in his/her section.
6. Is tolerant of different life-styles.
7. Encourages an atmosphere conducive to study.

### **Assisting Individual Students' Needs**

1. Is aware of individual student goals, abilities, and potential for achievement.
2. Is aware of isolated individuals and helps them make friends and become a part of the campus community.
3. Is aware of attitudes and behavior patterns of the residents in his/her hall.
4. Knows resources in the campus community to help students.
5. Is able to refer students for help effectively.
6. Is aware of adjustment problems for new students.
7. Is available for casual contacts and develops a pattern of available times.
8. Is a good listener and counseling helper.
9. Has good interpersonal skills.
10. Is aware of his own strengths and weaknesses (is self-aware).
11. Shows concern for people and their problems.
12. Follows up with students who have had a problem to see the results and to learn if other assistance can be given.

### **Hall Government Programs**

1. Encourages students' responsibility for their own residence hall programs.
2. Helps students to get involved with College organizations.
3. Provides creative suggestions for hall programs.
4. Has activities and programs in his/her hall.
5. Supports hall programs by personal attendance.