Housing and Residential Life

ASSESSABLE OUTCOME
Overall Outcome: Critical Thinking
• SLO 1: RAs will develop habits of critical thinking (such as inquiry and analysis).
• SLO 2: RAs will apply habits of inquiry and analysis to various job situations.
• SLO 3: RAs will support students in crisis.

OUTCOME SUPPORTS
☒ University: Goal 1
☒ Division: Goal 5
☐ Department: ________________
☐ Other: ___________________

ASSESSMENT APPROACH
☒ Direct assessment
☐ Indirect assessment
☒ Both direct and indirect assessment

METHODS AND MEASURES
A post survey was sent to all Resident Advisors. The survey included 32 questions using likert scale and open-ended response to measure student learning. The survey addressed multiple aspects of the Resident Advisor experience related to satisfaction, assessment of learning, supervisor feedback, and personal reflection. More specifically, we utilized a survey question for measuring our critical thinking outcomes. Students were given two weeks to respond. Results were coded based on the self-reported skills most common. Additionally, each Resident Advisor participated in a 30 minute exit interview where they reflected on an experience where they utilized their critical thinking skills. The RAs were asked to describe the incident, how they approached the situation, and the resolution. Each Community Coordinator rated their response utilizing a critical thinking rubric that was created. The rubric scores of each RA were combined and averaged to determine an overall score for the participants.

DATA COLLECTION TIMEFRAME
July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

DATA COLLECTION METHODS
Data collection methods include:
• Post-year survey
• Self-reporting
• Exit interview & Rubric

OUTCOME TYPE
☒ Performance Outcome
☒ Student Learning Outcome

CRITERIA OF SUCCESS
• 100% response rate
• Improvement of critical thinking skills, communication, relationship building, crisis management, time management, knowledge and utilization of campus resources.
• For the exit interview our criteria of success will be to meet an average of competent (3) for the critical thinking rubric.

Figure 1. A word cloud of the responses to survey Q1: “Please describe your experiences as an RA in three words.” (wordle.net)
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Results of the survey and exit interview demonstrated that RAs developed as well as improved habits of critical thinking through self-observation and addressing difficult incidents on the job. It was evident in the exit interviews that RAs applied their critical thinking skills in various incidents. Through finding resolutions, RAs were able to build on these skills in order to support students in crisis. When respondents self-reported the critical thinking habits they developed, as a result of the position, there was a wide but consistent variety of types of incidents where they were able to practice their critical thinking skills and support their peers. Respondents described an increase in their critical thinking skills through the following ways:

- Learning how to think outside the box
- Time management
- Problem solving skills
- Communication
- Addressing situations in a calm manner
- Recognizing and analyzing the seriousness of a situation
- Approaching all situations in an ethical manner.

Respondent respondents described an increase in their critical thinking skills through the following ways:

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- Time management
- Problem solving skills
- Communication
- Addressing situations in a calm manner
- Recognizing and analyzing the seriousness of a situation
- Approaching all situations in an ethical manner.

Resident Advisors were asked what the most difficult situation they worked through this year had been and the top responses were issues involving noise, duty, roommate conflicts, time management, alcohol, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. Resident Advisors were asked what the most difficult situation they worked through this year had been and the top responses were issues involving noise, duty, roommate conflicts, time management, alcohol, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. The following chart displays the list of the most common issues that arose for each RA, challenging their critical thinking skills.

Key Quotes:

“I definitely learned how to analyze a situation, communicate with logic to reason with the residents, and then make decisions based on my point of view.” – Response to Survey Question #6

“This happened when I have to mediate roommate or apartment problems. I have to analyze what was happening from both sides and listen to everyone before I knew what was the right way to approach the situation.” – Response to Survey Question #6

“I definitely learned how to analyze a situation, communicate with logic to reason with the residents, and then make decisions based on my point of view.” – Response to Survey Question #6
“Self-regulation, analysis, evaluation, and too many others.” – Response to Survey Question #6

“None that I didn’t have before, but those critical thinking skills have sharpened through practice. I also feel a bit more open to new ideas and thoughts.” – Response to Survey Question #6

“Overall this has easily been one of the best experiences of my life. I know for a fact that I have grown as a person from last year and it is because of the responsibilities I hold and knowing that people are looking up to me.” – Question 2

The exit interview data confirmed the results of RAs developing and applying habits of critical thinking. In measuring responses, our aim was for the average of RA ratings to reach the basic level of competence. Overall, our average surpassed this level. The figure below provides the total percentages of respondents on the rubric used to measure the individual responses to the interview question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RA Answers (41) *by average</th>
<th>Advanced 4</th>
<th>Competent 3</th>
<th>Basic 2</th>
<th>Poor 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation of issue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is interpreted with strong evaluation and comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of others are questioned thoroughly.</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of context and assumptions</td>
<td>Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others assumptions</td>
<td>Identifies own and other’s assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a viewpoint.</td>
<td>Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a viewpoint.</td>
<td>Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions. Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a viewpoint.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Housing and Residential Life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and carefully evaluations the relevance of contexts when presenting information.</th>
<th>presenting a position.</th>
<th>potion. May be more aware of other's assumptions than one's own.</th>
<th>position.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Student’ position (perspective, thesis, hypothesis) | Specific position (perspective) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of issues. Limits of position are acknowledged. Others’ points of view are synthesized within position. | Specific position takes into account the complexities of the issue. Others’ points of view are acknowledged. | Specific position acknowledges different sides of an issue. | Specific position is stated, but is simplistic and obvious. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 44% | 34% | 15% | 7% |

| Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences) | Conclusions are related to outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student’s informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order. | Conclusion/solution is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly. | Conclusion is logically tied to information. Some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly. | Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes are oversimplified. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 27% | 46% | 20% | 7% |

**IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS**
The information gained from both the Resident Advisor Survey and the Exit Interviews is beneficial to providing support that the students indeed did develop habits of critical thinking, apply those habits, and ultimately develop these while supporting students in crisis. Although we knew that Resident Advisors gain many benefits from the unique characteristics of the job, this information can help us to understand what specific situations enhance this development and how students perceive their own development. The responses provided by the resident advisors during the interview will help staff understand what may have prevented certain students from receiving higher scores on the critical thinking rubric. Whether through lack of practice or inability to implement taught training skills, each narrative can provide some insight. In conclusion, the data shows Resident Advisors gained or improved their critical thinking skills. It would be beneficial for future assessment to understand the level of improvement in critical thinking skills gained by understanding the level that Resident Advisors possessed prior to the position. Additionally, we did not reach the 100% response rate that was desired. There was a
93% response rate for the survey and a 99% response rate for the exit interview. In summary, we were able to show that resident advisors did improve in the critical thinking areas we described. In the future we will continue to use this information and more assessment to look into the impact this experience has for our students on persistence and retention.