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GROUPS 1996: Goals, Values, and Perceptions in Intentional Residence Life Interventions

Alan Rose, Mary F. York, and Larry D. Polley

This paper presents the findings of a study of the goals, values, and perceptions of interventions that were presented by the residence life staff during the 1996 GROUPS summer bridge program at Indiana University - Bloomington. Data collected from documents, interviews, and survey responses are analyzed using the ecosystem design model and Stern's need-press theory.

Residence halls can be educationally powerful environments that enhance educational outcomes for college students by connecting classroom learning with out-of-class experiences (Keller, 1993; Miser, 1977; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Stimpson, 1994). A comprehensive review of the literature conducted by Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blimling (1994) reveals that residence halls have a positive impact on all dimensions of student development with the possible exception of academic performance. Furthermore, residence halls that intentionally integrate their programs with the academic mission of their institutions have a more positive influence on student development, learning, and persistence than those which allow such connections to occur serendipitously or which operate on the periphery of institutional priorities (Kuh, 1994; Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Stimpson, 1994; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994).

Intentional programming models begin with goal setting which specifies desired outcomes in terms of student learning and development (Benjamin, 1988; Leafgren, 1981; Miller, Carpenter, McCaffrey, & Thompson, 1980; Sargeant, 1977; Smith, 1977). However, evidence of the outcomes of intentionally planned interventions is minimal in the literature. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to follow a specific set of intentional interventions from initial goal setting through the assessment of student perceptions and behaviors. This paper presents the findings of a study of the goals, values, and perceptions of interventions that were presented by the residence life staff during the 1996 GROUPS summer bridge program at Indiana University - Bloomington. First this paper reviews relevant literature and guiding environmental theories. Next, the methodologies used for the study are summarized. An overview and analysis of the data

follow. Subsequently, the findings are translated through ecosystem design and perceptual perspectives of environmental theory. Finally, implications and recommendations based on the findings are addressed.

Literature Review

Residential education and intentional programming

Hess and Winston (1995) found that students tend to seek activities that will enhance their strengths rather than those that will address their developmental needs. In addition, the Department of Residence Life at Indiana University - Bloomington, in a series of annual studies of student perceptions of the residence hall environment, consistently found that residents had neutral perceptions of residence hall programming (Bourassa, Noah, Schuh, & Wilbur, 1986). Finally, Buckner (1977) examined the residence life system at Northern Illinois University before and after a restructuring intended to encourage educationally purposeful programming efforts. He found that the restructuring resulted in an increase, both in quantity and in quality, of residence hall educational programming.

Summer bridge programs

Summer bridge programs integrate academic, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities to enhance the academic, personal, and social acclimation of first generation, low income, and minority students to the university experience (Buck, 1985). They offer services including academic advising, career planning, and tutorial assistance as well as opportunities to informally interact with faculty and administrators (York & Tross, 1994). These programs are intended to promote academic achievement and encourage student persistence. Livingston and Stewart (1987) conducted a study of minority students in a summer bridge program on a predominately white campus. They found that students ranked career planning, study skills, and leadership skills programs as the most effective services in assisting in their transition to university life.

The research indicates that summer bridge programs are highly effective in reducing the anxiety of and assisting in the social, personal and academic adjustment of first generation, low income, and minority students. Ackermann's (1991) study of the University of California—Los Angeles (UCLA) Freshman Summer Program found that students felt the

program facilitated their adjustment to university life generally, and to UCLA specifically. Moreover, 90% of all underrepresented freshman students who participated in the program continued into their second year. A survey administered to Summer Bridge Program students at California State University suggests that students who do not have the advantage of participating in summer bridge programs adjust more slowly to university life (Guthrie & Guthrie, 1988). In addition, the academic integration of summer bridge students was dramatically increased. Overall, students tended to study more, to have developed study groups, and to be more confident about their ability to succeed academically (Guthrie & Guthrie, 1988).

Campus ecology

Banning (1980) states that the campus ecology approach "focuses on the transactional relationship between the student and his or her environment" (p. 213). One way to describe these transactions is to utilize the ecosystem design process (Kaiser, 1978). This process is composed of seven steps: (a) identify the core values; (b) translate these values into goal statements; (c) translate goals into programs; (d) match the programs with the students; (e) assess student perceptions of the programs and the environment; (f) observe student behaviors; and (g) analyze the data gathered in the first six steps and provide feedback to improve future design efforts.

Stern's need-press theory

According to Strange (1991), "perceptual models acknowledge that a critical element in understanding how individuals experience an environment is their subjective interpretation of that environment" (p. 161). Stern's need-press theory attempts to determine the congruence and dissonance between individual student needs and environmental presses. First, it assumes that the interaction between the individual and the environment determines behavior. Second, it assumes that what individuals believe is important may be inferred from their behavior. Stern labels this concept as needs. Third, it assumes that what is important about the environment may be inferred from the perceptions of those within it. Stern labels this concept presses. According to Huebner (1989), Stern argues that a "stable and complementary combination of need and press [can produce]

a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment" (p. 169) in the educational experience of students.

Setting

GROUPS is a federally funded student support services program designed to increase success, including persistence, among an identified group of first generation, low income, and disabled students on the Indiana University - Bloomington campus (Embry, 1994). GROUPS students initially participate in a summer bridge program during which they attend classes for university credit, participate in campus activities, and live in a residence hall. The GROUPS summer bridge program gives GROUPS students an opportunity to experience the university before their freshman year in order to assist in their acclimation to the campus. Participation in the program is intentionally designed to assist students with the development of a sense of the university culture and an awareness of the campus resources.

The GROUPS summer bridge program is comprised of four loosely coupled functional areas: (a) the GROUPS Student Support Services Program Office; (b) the residence life staff that supervises the residence hall environment; (c) the academic support services, such as mentoring and tutoring, that are provided by campus agencies along with the GROUPS office; and (d) the academic departments that offer courses to the GROUPS students. The residence life staff may be further categorized into (a) leadership team members (RLLT), who develop a vision for the overall summer residence life program; and (b) resident assistants (RAs), who engage in informal interaction with GROUPS students on a regular basis. During the summer bridge program, the RAs present a series of intentionally designed programs under the title *Tour de GROUPS (TdG)*. These programs are supposed to be based upon a set of goals identified by the RLLT. The researchers focused their attention on this series of programs. In order to most clearly differentiate between the GROUPS Program and *TdG* programs, this paper will refer to the latter as *interventions*.

This study sought to answer four related questions. First, what goals does the GROUPS RLLT have for the summer bridge program and are their intentions congruent with the goals of GROUPS administrators?

Second, to what extent do the goals that guide *TdG* interventions reflect the goals of GROUPS administrators and the RLLT? Third, what interventions are presented as part of *TdG* and to what extent do these interventions reflect both *TdG* and general GROUPS goals? Finally, do GROUPS students recognize when *TdG* goals and general GROUPS goals are included in interventions, and to what extent do they attend and learn from these interventions?

Methodology

The theoretical frameworks used by the researchers guided the creation of a three part methodology for this study. In order to determine goals and values, and in order to identify interventions, the researchers collected documents from and conducted interviews with key participants in the design and implementation of the GROUPS Program and *TdG* interventions. Assessment of student perceptions and behaviors was accomplished through the design and administration of a survey instrument.

Document collection

Relevant documents were collected from the GROUPS and residence life programs. Analysis of these documents revealed goals and themes that were used to design the survey instrument. These documents also provided the researchers with an understanding of the GROUPS Program and of the framework that RAs used for developing interventions.

Interviews

Two GROUPS Program administrators, two members of the RLLT, and two RAs were invited by telephone to participate in individual interviews. Each interview was conducted by two members of the research team and lasted approximately one hour. All interviews were held in office or conference room settings in the buildings in which the participants worked. An interview schedule consisting of seven open-ended questions served as a guide during the interviews. Both research team members present at each interview created a written record of the participants' responses during the interview. Afterwards, these records were compared to check for intercollector reliability.

Survey

GROUPS students were invited to complete a survey instrument during their weekly advising session in the sixth week of the eight week program by GROUPS Program advisors. The advisor presented the student with a study information sheet prepared by the researchers. This study information sheet explained the purpose of the study and presented students with the option of completing an instrument. The instrument consisted of 21 questions, most of which specifically addressed one or all of the themes identified in the documents obtained from residence life. Due to time constraints, the researchers were unable to confirm the reliability or validity of the instruments which they used.

Although the researchers intended to invite the entire population of 162 GROUPS students to participate, only about one-third of the students were actually invited due to unanticipated advisor scheduling conflicts. In all, 53 students returned surveys, representing 32.7% of the population and 94.6% of the students to whom instruments were actually distributed.

Results

Document Analysis

The contents of the documents were analyzed in order to locate statements regarding the goals of both GROUPS administrators and the RLLT. In addition, the nature of the interventions presented under the *TdG* model, as well as a basic understanding of the model itself, were sought. All three researchers read each document and highlighted portions they deemed to be significant for the study purposes. They then compared their results and discussed differences of opinion until they came to consensus. The researchers intended to assess the accuracy of their results by comparing the goals drawn from document analysis with those provided during interviews.

GROUPS documents. The GROUPS office provided copies of (a) the packet of information sent to high school guidance counselors who recommend students for the GROUPS Program, (b) the GROUPS Student Handbook and Application Packet, and (c) the GROUPS Program Vision Statement. Analysis of these documents revealed two goals. The first and more prevalent of the two is to assist GROUPS students in making the

transition from high school to college. The second goal is to enhance students' potential for persisting through graduation. Although the documents do mention this goal, the GROUPS Student Handbook alludes to persistence enhancement far less often than it mentions assisting students with their transition. In part, this may be explained by the fact that GROUPS students' foremost concern before entering the college environment is probably about what they should expect to find once they arrive on campus.

Residence life documents. The RLLT provided (a) the *TdG* manual, (b) the *TdG Program/Activity Proposal Forms* completed by RAs, and (c) access to calendar of interventions that was displayed in the RA duty office. The *TdG Manual* (1996) specifies that the goal of residence life interventions should be to challenge and educate GROUPS students. Interventions should be intentionally planned and their content should be based on the needs of the students as assessed by RAs. The *Manual* instructs each RA to participate in the development of at least four interventions during the program. At the time of the study, a total of 32 interventions had been presented.

Analysis of the documents revealed eleven themes for residence life interventions: (a) building community, (b) learning about the Indiana University - Bloomington campus or the Bloomington area, (c) health and fitness, (d) safety and security, (e) stress reduction, (f) relationships, (g) understanding gender roles, (h) recreation, (i) increasing awareness of diversity issues, (j) enhancing creativity, and (k) preparation for fall 1996. These themes are referred to as *TdG themes*. The *TdG* themes may be summarized into two general goals. First, the residence life staff intends to provide opportunities for GROUPS students to gain the knowledge and experience that they will need to survive as college students. Second, the residence life staff desires to present information which will enhance GROUPS students' potential for persistence.

Interviews

Each interviewee was asked to identify the goals of both the GROUPS Program as a whole and the residence life component of the program. They were also asked to identify the values which they believed led to the formulation of the goals that they identified.

GROUPS administrators. According to the GROUPS administrators who participated in this study, the primary goals of the GROUPS Program are to enhance persistence among the targeted student population and to provide academic and preparatory services intended to assist students in meeting their goals. The administrators stated that the primary value underlying these goals is the recognition of the importance of education as both a practical method of improving employment opportunities and a worthwhile endeavor for its own sake. Although they were aware that residence life offers several programs each week, they had not been informed of any specific programs that had been planned.

RLLT. The members of the RLLT who participated in this study identified assisting targeted students to enter and complete college as the primary goal of the GROUPS Program. Among the values which they cited as underlying this goal were the importance of education; the need for reasonably high expectations in terms of attendance, punctuality, and academic achievement; and the need to provide services for students at a level appropriate to each individual's needs. The members of the RLLT mentioned each of the *TdG* themes and provided examples of specific interventions. Like the GROUPS administrators, the team members perceived a weak link between residence life and the GROUPS administration.

RAs. The RAs who participated in this study identified several goals of the GROUPS Program such as admitting students who might not otherwise enter college and providing them with the academic background, resources, and support they will need for success. In addition, they asserted that the GROUPS Program attempts to familiarize students with the university, increase their involvement in university life, and prepare them academically. The value that they cited as underlying GROUPS programming goals was the importance of academics and grades. Additional values mentioned by RAs included the need for the development of student initiative, effort, respect, responsibility, and time management skills. The RAs identified specific residence life programs, including one which introduces current GROUPS students to successful GROUPS alumni, as the programming through which these goals are achieved.

Survey

Awareness. Respondents were aware of all eleven *TdG* themes to varying degrees. They were most aware of interventions focusing on relationships (83.0%). The next highest awareness ratings were for health and fitness and recreational interventions (each 54.7%), interventions which introduced students to the campus or to Bloomington (52.8%), and preparation for the fall semester (49.1%). Each of the other *TdG* themes was identified by fewer than one third of the respondents. This indicates that, in general, student awareness of *TdG* themes is rather low. The respondents either do not know about interventions or they do not perceive interventions' themes.

Attendance. Respondents reported substantially lower intervention attendance than intervention awareness for most *TdG* themes. The highest reported attendance was at interventions focusing on preparation for the fall semester (43.3%) followed by interventions about relationships (41.5%) and those which introduced students to the campus or to Bloomington (34.0%). The mean number of *TdG* themes for which respondents reported having attended one or more interventions was 2.90.

Learning. Higher percentages of respondents reported that residence life interventions had enhanced their abilities in *TdG* theme areas than reported attending interventions for most *TdG* themes. In addition, the number of respondents that indicated that interventions had enhanced their learning was greater than or equal to the number that reported awareness of interventions for all but three *TdG* themes. Most respondents reported that residence life interventions had prepared them for the fall semester (57.5%), taught them about campus and about Bloomington (56.6%), and helped them to understand gender roles (52.0%).

Effectiveness. Respondents were asked to identify the three most effective *TdG* themes from among the interventions which they had attended. Each theme was identified as one of the three most effective *TdG* themes by at least one respondent. Preparation for fall semester was selected most often as the theme of the most effective intervention (9). This theme and the relationship theme were selected most often as the second most effective *TdG* theme (6 each). Recreational interventions were selected most often as third most effective (6). In addition, the researchers

combined the number of first, second, and third selections together for each *TdG* theme. Preparation for the fall semester was selected most often (18), followed by learning about the campus or Bloomington (14) and relationships (13.5).

Satisfaction. Students were neutral regarding the overall effect of residence life interventions on their summer experience. More respondents indicated that they had no opinion of whether residence life interventions had enhanced their educational experience (35.8%) or failed to respond to the item (7.5%) than reported that they disagreed (30.2%) or agreed (26.5%) that it had. In contrast, more respondents indicated that their living arrangement was conducive to academic achievement (48.1%) than not (18.9%), while only 27.3% reported no opinion and 5.7% failed to respond.

Summary. The students who completed survey instruments appear to have some recognition of all of the *TdG* themes. However, they report high levels of awareness, attendance, and learning only from interventions about expectations for the fall semester, learning about the university and the city, recreation, and relationships. These themes may be summarized as two goals: (a) to assist GROUPS students in their transition between high school and college; and (b) to enhance students' chances of persisting to graduation.

Data Analysis

The goals identified through document analyses of GROUPS and residence life documents are congruent. Furthermore, the goals identified by GROUPS administrators and the RLLT during interviews are congruent. Therefore, the goals of the GROUPS Program are congruent with the goals of the residence life program. However, whereas the GROUPS Program tended to state its goals explicitly, the RLLT indicated goals in direct terms occasionally and implied them through *TdG* themes more frequently.

RA goals are basically congruent with the goals identified by the RLLT. Similarly, RA goals are basically congruent with the goals identified by GROUPS administrators. However, although RAs indicated during their interviews that academics were of the highest priority for the summer experience of GROUPS students, the interventions they designed did not directly address academic concerns.

Student perceptions of goals are basically congruent with the goals identified from analysis of documents and interview data provided by GROUPS administrators. However, GROUPS documents and administrators tend to be relatively certain of GROUPS Program goals and less certain of *TdG* themes. In contrast, student perceptions of goals and themes tend to be weak.

As the RLLT members with whom we spoke predicted, students tended not to recognize that interventions based on *TdG* themes were presented. However, student goals appear to be congruent with the goals identified from analysis of documents and interview data provided by the RLLT. This congruence is tempered by two facts: (a) not all students recognize these goals to the same extent as other students do; and (b) some students are more cognizant of the goal regarding assisting them with the transition to college than they are aware of the goal of ensuring that they persist to graduation.

GROUPS students' goals are basically consistent with those of RAs. However, GROUPS students tended to place a greater emphasis on academics than on residence life interventions. Whereas RAs perceived academics and residence life interventions as complementary and congruent, GROUPS students found that time constraints occasionally forced them to choose one over the other. In most cases, it appears that students selected academic pursuits. This distinction actually indicates that GROUPS students are committed to the goals of the overall GROUPS Program because academic pursuits are a crucial element of both transition and persistence.

Discussion

Campus Ecology

Step one: Value identification. The values identified by GROUPS administrators and residence life staff members were the importance of (a) an education, (b) discipline, (c) responsibility, and (d) prior experience with the college environment. These were apparent in the majority of the data collected for the study.

Step two: Translate values into goal statements. The values identified in step one underlie each of the primary goals of the GROUPS program as they are stated above. Furthermore, these values undergird the *TdG* themes.

Step three: Translate goals into programs. Residence life interventions are designed to meet many of the *TdG* themes. From a broader perspective, residence life interventions tended to meet the two overarching goals of the GROUPS Program, although they were more likely to focus on transition than on persistence.

Step four: Target programs to student groups. In general, residence life interventions meet the needs of the target student population. One ongoing intervention that was especially effective in matching student needs was a quiet study lounge.

Step five: Measure students' environmental perceptions. In general students were most aware of, most likely to report having learned from, and most likely to rate as effective interventions focusing on relationships, recreation, and preparation for the fall semester. Students appear to perceive these as the most important *TdG* themes.

Step six: Observe student behaviors. Students were most likely to attend interventions that prepared them for the fall semester or discussed relationships. More importantly, students were unlikely to attend residence life interventions in general. This may be a result of students' self-reported focus on academic pursuits.

Step seven: Analyze data and provide feedback. A version of this paper was presented to RLLT members and to GROUPS Program administrators as feedback. Furthermore, the researchers devised a list of recommendations, which is presented below.

Stern's Need-Press Theory

From the data, the researchers inferred that students have four needs. The need that is most important to students is the need for academic success. The next most important need, preparing for the fall semester, receives substantially less attention when measured solely according to residence life intervention attendance. However, the students' academic

focus certainly enhances their preparation efforts. The final two student needs are the need for building relationships and the need for recreation.

The environmental presses inferred from the data are: (a) the importance of being prepared for the fall semester; (b) the drive to engage in positive interpersonal relationships; and (c) the importance of play or recreation. Furthermore, one press which students identified as important in the overall GROUPS Program but lacking in residence life interventions was an emphasis on academic concerns.

The needs of students are partially met by residence life interventions. However, although residence life interventions focus on preparing students for the fall semester, on relationships, and on recreation, the primary need of students is not adequately addressed. Students' behavior suggests that academic success is their main need. Their perceptions indicate that residence life interventions do not address their academic concerns. However, the debate over whether residence life interventions should directly respond to this need lies outside of the scope of this research. In summary, a complementary system of student needs and residence life intervention presses exists with the one possible exception of students academic needs.

Implications

This study has potential implications for the GROUPS Program, residence life programs, and other efforts at campus programming. First, GROUPS administrators and the RLLT can each learn more about what the other attempts to accomplish during the summer bridge program. Each component of the GROUPS summer program may choose to reexamine its own goals and to explore methods to foster alternative methods of collaboration. Second, RLLT members may gain a greater understanding of how the *TdG* model is implemented by RAs and how students perceive it. Recognition of strengths and weaknesses might allow the RLLT to alter *TdG* to improve the delivery, recognition, and appropriateness of interventions as necessary. Third, GROUPS administrators may increase their knowledge about the effects of the residence life component of the summer bridge program on GROUPS students. Fourth, residence life educators at Indiana University - Bloomington and elsewhere can learn about the obstacles to and students' perceptions of a residential education

curriculum. Although this sample of one student support services program is not representative, this examination of *TdG* may reveal insights that residential educators can apply to their own programs. Fifth, residence life and other programming bodies may be interested to note the extent to which students perceive the goals that guide intentional interventions. Finally, this study provides evidence of the applicability of two environmental frameworks to residence life interventions in practice. It found that the ecosystem design process can effectively illuminate the strengths and limitations of residence life interventions, and it utilized Stern's need-press theory to locate congruencies and inconsistencies between student needs and environmental presses.

Recommendations

Recommendations for practice

GROUPS administrators should consider developing a steering committee to coordinate the efforts and requirements of the GROUPS Program office, the residence life staff, and the various academic support services and departments that contribute to the summer program. They should also develop a system that follows student achievement and supports their needs through graduation. In addition they should enhance tutoring offered in the residence hall so that it addresses students' overall academic needs.

The RLLT should ensure that residence life interventions are planned before students arrive, develop a schedule of interventions, and provide copies of the schedule both to GROUPS administrators and to students. In addition, they should expand the training provided to RAs and ensure that GROUPS administrators and staff are included in the process in order to clearly delineate the educational goals and values of the GROUPS Program. RAs should provide additional opportunities for student interaction during their first week of the summer program and beyond. Finally, greater collaboration among GROUPS administrators, residence life staff and academic support agents is strongly encouraged.

Recommendations for further study

Other researchers may wish to study GROUPS students' perceptions of summer program residence life interventions after the students have

returned to the university in the fall. Furthermore, they should examine the effects of residence life interventions on academic achievement and persistence longitudinally as students continue their academic careers. Finally, they should examine other intentionally designed intervention models and summer bridge programs to determine their actual effects on students.

Conclusion

TdG is an intentionally designed curriculum of residential education interventions. It is a functional element of the summer bridge program provided by GROUPS Student Support Services designed to assist first generation, low income and disabled students acclimate to the Indiana University - Bloomington environment as well as to enhance their persistence. This study has uncovered GROUPS Program, residence life, and *TdG* goals and confirmed that they are essentially congruent. Moreover, it has found that interventions presented under the *TdG* model reflect these goals. Furthermore, it has found that students are aware of these goals, although perhaps to a lower degree than would be ideal. In addition, it found that GROUPS students reported having learned from *TdG* interventions. This study has also applied the ecosystem design process and the need-press model to analyze the data through perspectives suggested by environmental theory. Despite its limitations, this study should provide GROUPS administrators and the RLLT with valuable information that will assist in the planning of future summer bridge programs.

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The Role of Faculty in the Governance of Intercollegiate Athletics

Katrina Ross

This paper discusses the role of faculty in intercollegiate athletics by tracing the evolution of the faculty athletics representative (FAR). Weaknesses surrounding the FAR's current position and governance responsibilities are identified, and implications for the present and future are offered.

Institutional control of intercollegiate athletics has been the source of considerable controversy since they began in 1852 (Frey, 1988). The governance of college sports in the United States has changed hands several times over the last 100 years as students, alumni, college presidents, faculty, and athletic directors have all enjoyed periods of control (Berryman & Hardy, 1982). But since their early involvement, faculty members, especially those appointed as a representatives of athletic interests, have attempted to find their place in relation to the educational function of athletic programs (Ramer, 1980). This paper discusses the role and place of faculty athletics representatives (FARs) in intercollegiate athletics by tracing their evolution since the beginning of intercollegiate athletics, describing the weaknesses surrounding their positions and their relation to athletic departments, and providing implications for the present and future.

The Evolution of Faculty Control in Intercollegiate Athletics

One of the most surprising factors revealed in the study of college athletics is the historical absence of effective faculty governance of the athlete's educational experience (Weistart, 1987). The role of the faculty in controlling intercollegiate athletics grew from the traditional relationship between faculty and students in extracurricular activities. When student control of athletics became chaotic, it became necessary for faculty to assume control (Shea & Wieman, 1967). In the case of intercollegiate athletics, students developed sports programs without regard to academic and safety concerns, and this perceived lack of responsibility led to faculty action (Smith, 1988).