

### Living-Learning Center

This fall, Men's Residence Center, more commonly known as M.R.C., began the first I.U. experimental Living-Learning Center, made possible through the combined efforts of the Department of Residence Life, the University Division, the Halls of Residence, the Colleges and Schools of the campus, and the students and staff of M.R.C. It is hoped that through the combination of academic and counseling programs within the Center, a small innovative academic unit with opportunities for intellectual enrichment and the growth of personal relationships will develop.

### New Faculty Members

This year, Dr. Donald Coan has joined the faculty of the CSPA Department and is currently teaching the course, U590, The College Student and His Environment. Dr. Coan has just completed his PhD. in Social Psychology at the University of Michigan where he was at the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching for a year. Prior to his time at the University of Michigan, he was at Florida State University in the Institute of Human Learning, Human Development, and the Department of Educational Research and Testing. Dr. Coan's course, The College Student and His Environment, is offered to CSPA students as an elective to fulfill the educational psychology requirement of the School of Education.

Another new faculty member teaching C565 is Dr. William Day. He comes to I.U. from Cooke County Junior College in Gainesville, Texas, where he has been Vice President for Instructional Affairs. Prior to that, he was Assistant Professor and Assistant to the Director of the School Planning Laboratory at the University of Tennessee, where he also received his EdD. in Educational Administration and Supervision in 1970.

### Combined Academic Program Formally Developed

It is now possible for students wishing to combine administration and counseling for work in a higher education setting to do so in a two-year program fulfilling the requirements for a Masters degree in both Student Personnel Administration and in Counseling and Guidance. A student must be admitted to both departments and secure an advisor from each department. Currently, Dr. Betty Greenleaf from CSPA and Dr. Ron Baker from C & G are acting as advisors.

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Check your program carefully and plan on attending the Indiana University Alumni Breakfast at NAWDC and an Alumni social at ACPA, Cleveland, Ohio, April 4-8.

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Drop Dr. Greenleaf a brief note if you are interested in a job change. Be sure to indicate preference for change.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following two articles were prepared for the 1972 Residence Hall Workshop. At the workshop they led to lively discussion on the role of the R.A. The papers were also used on campuses this fall as a part of in-service training for R.A.s.

### AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL FOR THE ROLE OF RESIDENCE HALL

#### STAFF RELEVANT TO DISCIPLINE

by Elaine Green

As the characteristics of students and expectations for the college experience change, so should the functioning of residence hall staff. It is my understanding that the Resident Assistant (or floor counselor) job description originated under the guise of the traditional concept of in loco parentis; the R.A.'s raison d'etre being to insure order and a purely "academic" environment by the enforcement of university rules of conduct. I believe that the present role of the R.A. has outgrown this model as a result of the current student personnel philosophy. Generally R.A.s are mandated to function relevant to this original set of expectations. I wish to address myself to the question of staff, as student personnel workers, operating in a meaningful way in regards to discipline while accounting for these contemporary expectations student personnel researchers hold for the students' university experience.

Several assumptions are made. First is that the environment one lives in can work to enhance learning. The residence hall staff works to enrich the environment within the residence halls of the university. The environment is assumed to have a major affect upon the total human personality as it develops in students during the college years. Residence halls staff have as goals the development of the personality so individuals may achieve competence, manage emotions, become autonomous, establish identity, free interpersonal relationships, clarify purposes, and develop integrity.<sup>1</sup> Generally the goal of having students understand and assume full responsibility for their actions is strived for.

Due to the unique setting in which the Resident Assistant finds himself, he is at the optimal position to effect student growth and development. Because of his close interaction with students, he can affect the environment in such a way that it has positive effects on both learning and personality development in individuals.

The question lies in determining exactly how the Resident Assistant may best meet these goals. The problem lies in his present prescribed posture relevant to enforcing conduct rules and regulations and the conflicts inherent in this imperative.

I believe we should consider a redefinition of the R.A.'s responsibilities such that they enable him to better meet goals for growth and development of the students in his unit.

Using Indiana University as an example; in the present condition each R.A. is responsible for enforcing conduct rules prescribed for the university in general, conduct rules specifically for campus residence halls, as well as all state and federal laws on university property. Because students often perceive the rationale for the enforcement of these rules as based on the in loco parentis concept or some other rationale perceived not to be legitimate,<sup>2</sup> the Resident Assistant's role in enforcing rules often leads to his loss of credibility and approachability, both of which are necessary if goals for student development are to be reached. It seems to me that the R.A. is typically caught in a nearly irresolvable conflict when he is forced to be both a disciplinarian and a counselor. This conflict is probably escalated by the increased legalism and due process in our adjudication proceedings. As soon as the R.A. turns over a report on student conduct to a judicial body, in the eyes of the students he immediately becomes a policing agent, precluding most action as a counselor. On the other hand, the specific living conditions in the residence halls make it imperative that some checks and standards for the academic atmosphere as well as some mechanism for holding students accountable must be maintained.

I perceive three alternatives as models for resolving this dilemma. The first would be to define the role of the R.A. as an agent for social control and quasi-legal enforcement of rules, regulations and laws only. The second is to define the role as a personal counselor and academic advisor with no responsibility for sanctioning behavior and dealing with the environment within the living unit.

The third alternative is the option I would like to examine because I believe it may allow for the effective combination of these roles. It is my contention that the roles of the R.A. relevant to discipline should change from the obligation for policing conduct and enforcing rules and state and federal laws to the function of assisting students in maintaining an environment in which they can best meet their responsibilities as a student. It may be possible to expand the R.A.'s effectiveness in aiding in student development while still holding students accountable for the academic environment.

The behavioral interpretation of this model of social influence for the R.A. is that it is to be the students who take the primary responsibility in maintaining the environment. This assumption of responsibility is an important educative and developmental step for students to take. Experience has proven, however, that saying students have the responsibility is imperative. The expectation is that the R.A. must know the rules and regulations pertaining to student behavior in the residence halls and fully understand their relation to student needs for an educationally-oriented environment. Along with this knowledge is the responsibility to inform students of the rationale for each

relevant rule. The R.A. is expected to act as a teacher of social responsibility for the residents of his unit rather than a policing force. He must stress from the beginning of the year that it is primarily the residents themselves who will establish a controlled environment. Attention to individuals in their assumption of this responsibility will be necessitated by the developmental level of some students. Occasionally the Resident Assistant may need to urge a student to stand up for his rights as a citizen of his living unit and encourage that appropriate action be taken against students who infringe on the rights of another individual.

I believe that a legitimate rationale for the enforcement of rules and regulations in the residence halls that would be accepted by both students and Resident Assistants is the concept of protection against infringement of rights. By this rationale of protection of individual and group rights the enforcement of rules and the initiating of adjudication proceedings is contingent on the infringement of these rights.

The R.A. is expected to assist individuals and student leaders to enforce rules and regulations when persons infringe on another's rights as a result of violation of the university's conduct rules, or unit and quadrangle legislated rules. Such action by the R.A. may include: aiding the complainant in conferring with or issuing a warning to the infringing students, pointing out the alternatives to the complainant (talking with the infringing students, writing a student report), calling Safety, or as a last resort, writing a staff report which may initiate adjudication proceedings. It is to be a defined expectation that the Resident Assistant invoke a rule and/or initiate disciplinary proceedings himself only if 1) a resident confronts the R.A. with a situation in which his basic rights, e.g., privacy, having a quiet place to sleep and study, have been violated, and 2) it is a situation the student is unable to handle himself. Efforts should be made by the R.A. to inform students of this role and the situations in which he will take disciplinary action.

It is the feeling that this expansion of the role of the Resident Assistant relevant to discipline will have profound effects on the potential of the R.A. role and the potential for student development. The role of the R.A. will be enhanced because he will now be mandated to become an educator and facilitator of student development and the acceptance of responsibility. By role definition, problems of environmental control can no longer be totally "dumped" on the R.A. He must interact meaningfully with students to resolve difficulties. The new role will no doubt have positive effects on the R.A.'s credibility and approachability, rendering him more effective in other areas such as personal and academic counseling.

The R.A.'s role will change so that he is not the policing agent for the university. This is a function more logically assumed by the university police, consistent with the trend toward

legalism.<sup>3</sup> If we are to treat students in such a manner as to prepare them to be citizens of society, we should be helping them in dealing with a more legalistic disciplinary system, analogous to civil enforcement in society at large, rather than confronting him with an "education" control system he has outgrown and quickly learns to "beat". Because I believe students accept the rationale of non-infringement of rights as criteria for enforcing rules, I feel peer pressure is more likely to be in favor of reasonable conduct. This peer pressure should interact with the new role of the R.A. (as advisor in conduct problems) to inhibit the present phenomena of students seeing how much they can get away with without being "caught" by the R.A., thus racking havoc with the environment and the R.A.'s effectiveness. It seems very likely that the idea of utilizing a unit student judicial board would fit into this schema. The board could make preliminary decisions to determine if rights have been infringed upon. They may also apply appropriate sanctions or report to the housing center, Student Government, or whichever is the appropriate J-Board for arbitration.

The potential advantages directly experienced by the students may be further expounded. This model stresses the more worthwhile goal of citizenship training rather than just obeying rules for the rules' sake. It can hardly be argued that our society needs more responsible citizenry: where individuals are accustomed to taking the responsibility for the environment themselves and in an appropriate manner, and considering the rights of others in their actions. It is my feeling that the university in the person of residence hall staff can and ought to be serving society by facilitating the development of these citizenship attitudes and behaviors.

It is my hope that the implementation of this new role for Resident Assistants will initiate much more worthwhile and beneficial experiences for students living in the university's residence halls.

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<sup>1</sup>Chickering, A., Education and Identity, Jossey-Bass, 1969.

<sup>2</sup>This statement is based on my own research of attitudes of residents of the halls at Indiana University; Spring, 1972.

<sup>3</sup>It is my understanding that most public institutions are mandated to enforce state and federal law on campus. I am not refuting this, only proposing the appropriate arm of the university is the university police division, not the residence hall staff. I feel university police could assume a role more closely approximating civil police, where they don't necessarily patrol every private residence unless disturbances occur and their presence is needed or called for. Some redefinition of the officers' avenues for resolving conflict will probably occur. If the officers are fully enfranchised police, they may make arrests, but more often could function to issue warnings to report conduct to appropriate channels, e.g., Dean of Students, Hall Director, Judicial Boards, and thereby initiate institutional adjudication procedures.

EVERYTHING I ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BEING AN R.A.

BUT SOMEONE WAS AFRAID TO TELL ME.

by Jonathan Hess

The Resident Assistant's role can be viewed as the composite of five basic functions: discipline, clerical, personal advising, program advising, and academic advising. I will discuss each of these separately beginning with discipline.

Unfortunately many students and R.A.'s are of the opinion that the role of disciplinarian and the role of counselor are incompatible. I have not found this to be the case. In fact, if discipline is handled properly it can be an asset in the R.A.'s functioning on the floor. It serves as one of the few means of setting the R.A. apart from the students as a professional, as more than a friend or "buddy" so to speak. I will discuss this idea of professional versus friend a little later.

Actually it is a misnomer to call the R.A. a disciplinarian because he has little actual authority and yet he is still supposed to enforce the rules. He is in an impossible position. He did not make the rules, he does not decide the penalties and yet he must relate and interpret institutional expectations to students on a day-to-day basis.

Rule enforcement is a crucial problem. It is the cause of an inordinate amount of conflict for the R.A. Under the present rule structure a proper approach to rule enforcement is impossible, particularly if the R.A. does not have specific guidelines for enforcement.

The reason a proper approach is impossible is because there is such a discontinuity between student behavioral norms and rules themselves. The vogue these days is to gradually give in to student demands. Just because students do not like a rule or because it is frequently violated is not reason enough to change a rule. Rules and regulations should presumably be educational. If they are performing that function they should be kept, if not then they should be modified.

Ideally if rules are going to exist they should be enforced. It only encourages hypocrisy and irresponsibility to ignore them. But it is obviously impossible to enforce them to a significant degree. And this is precisely the problem. The R.A. is almost forced to take a middle ground which is what I have tried to do. To maintain my own integrity I write staff reports for all violations that I see. But I make sure that I do not go looking for violations. This means that the guys can violate rules pretty much at will but they must use at least a modicum of discretion. This system has worked very well for me and it has caused very little friction with the guys. They understand my position and know that I enforce the rules consistently. Although this system