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Student Development in Residence Life

Systems: A Framework for Understanding Intentional Education/Outputs

by

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Student Development in Residence Life Systems: A Framework for Understanding Intentional Education/Outputs

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Introduction

The residence life strategic planning committee consists of the staff of the Richmond College Dean's Office. They are primarily Area Coordinators and are headed by the Assistant Dean of Richmond College. I am the only student on this committee and am using this opportunity to participate in their activity of creating a strategic plan to be implemented in next year's residence life activities. The plan must work within the parameters of the University's strategic plan, Engagement in Learning. This committee divided the process into four areas: Intentional Education/Outputs, Staff Support and Development, Students and Their Community, Publicity/Awareness. Each of these areas was given to a sub-committee that consisted of one of the members of the greater committee and four to five other members of the University community selected by the head of each sub-committee. My sub-committee has been working to identify the relevant issues and prescribing the appropriate goals associated with Intentional Education/Outputs.

The primary purpose of this paper is to identify relevant research to student development within a college setting, analyze this material, and use it as a means of supporting the recommendations made by my sub-committee. I hope to identify the concept of culture within the context of this college's residence life system and how it is an effective medium for the University to enhance student development. I will show how this culture can best be applied as determined by the work of the residence life strategic planning subcommittee on Intentional Education/Outputs and support this notion with various studies of student development. And, I will show how culture is ultimately related to leadership.

Leadership research has shown us that the leadership process in virtually all disciplines can be broken down into three elements; leader, follower, and context. This third element can also be understood as culture. Often, it is the leaders ability to manipulate the context or culture in which the leadership occurs that renders the process effective. Schein's (1990) study of organizational culture and leadership tells us:

Organizational cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation, the management, and- if and when that may become necessary- the destruction of culture. Culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be
understood by itself. In fact, there is a possibility—underemphasized in leadership research—that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture (p.2).

The study I offer examines various student development theories in an attempt to construct an epistemological foundation for the creation of a strategic plan for the residence life system of Richmond College. The student development process occurring at this level indicates a need for intentional educational advances. Schein's observations speak to the impact that the leadership process has when viewed in light of residence life systems and how an effective staff will help to create a culture within the residences that can facilitate a greater development of the student.
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Chapter 1

Engagement in Learning

The focus of this strategic planning is the implementation of policies and systems that will work toward the connection of residential, social, and intellectual life. These programs must provide a balance between challenge and support mechanisms so that maximum growth can be achieved by the residents of Richmond College. The University of Richmond’s strategic plan, Engagement in Learning, notes several issues that are to be addressed by the residence life staffs of the two colleges. The central emphasis of this plan is the engagement of students intellectually. In regard to residence life, the plan notes the work of Alexander Astin, most recently presented in What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited (Jossey-Bass, 1993). Astin and other researchers found that a long list of positive educational and personal characteristics are associated with many of the experiences that are more likely to occur in a residential collegiate setting (Engagement in Learning, 36). Astin’s work emphasizes the importance of students becoming involved in academic and other programs. The type of involvement, whether it be academic, athletic, volunteer, or even in a campus job, is less important than the fact of involvement (36). The motivation that arises from any form of satisfying involvement influences positively the student’s academic experience (36).

Astin’s work is relevant in the sense that it recognizes the importance of participation within the greater processes that are impacting residents of a given community. The student’s own ability to impact his situation is paramount in understanding the potential for change within the residence life system. Part of the responsibility, then, to connect the social, intellectual, and residential life of residents falls directly on the students. Thus, to engage the students in this process would seem to be the most effective way to bring about the desired connection. Because the residence life staff cannot make that connection for the students, it must create conditions in which students can make the connection themselves, both willingly and consciously. The residential culture is the product of these and other conditions.

Current research and literature has implicated the potential power that the residential experience can have in contributing to the fulfillment of the purposes of an educational institution.
Astin listed two primary influential groups of relationships that impact the student; the peer group and the members of the faculty. The author showed "substantial evidence to support the dominance of peer group relationships in influencing a variety of characteristics such as the degree of student interest in intellectual achievement, career choice, social and political attitudes, personal relationships, and so forth (36)." It is this peer group that can directly regulate student perspective, activity, and development. The latter group also impacts this periphery, perhaps to a lesser degree. However, it is the combined influence of these two groups that shapes the core values of the student. As noted in Pascarella's (1985) study, the influence of on-campus living is great and the intellectual and social self-concepts of students are strongly affected by their relationships with faculty and peers. This would seem to indicate a further need for the residence life strategic planning committee to construct such opportunities for interaction between students and faculty as well as influence the activity of peer groups.

Aside from the attempts to integrate faculty involvement and implement methods of directing peer groups effectively, the physical environment that the students occupy is of utmost importance in the establishing of conditions in which the aforementioned connection can occur. Facilities must be conducive for assembly, discussion, and recreation to an extent. This need is recognized in *Engagement in Learning:* the thirty-first (rough copy) goal of the University is to complete an "architectural review of the various options for creating additional lounge and meeting space within the various Richmond College residences (40)." In addition to renovation, actual construction of a new facility connecting several residence halls, as well as common space in the University Forest Apartments have been suggested as possible solutions to the problematic facilities that currently exist.

The issues discussed in the University's strategic plan provide the residence life strategic planning committee with a solid foundation for further development of the residence life systems. The plan that this committee produces must work under the greater vision of the University's plan. So, while it does provide some grounding for this committee, it also restricts the parameters that must be worked within.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Perhaps one of the most unique aspects of American colleges and Universities is the opportunity they afford students living in residence halls for continued education through established programming efforts (Engagement in Learning, 36). These programming efforts further extend the educational outputs of an institution and allow for greater involvement and responsibility to be taken by students directly in the creation of their community. This, in turn, can assist in the continued development of residents in these environments. My review of relevant literature has yielded two major areas studied in the impact of creating a culture that enhances student development: the implementation of student development interventions and student development theories applied.

Student Development Theory and Student Needs

Interventions

The development of students within the University setting is an important part of current residence life strategies. Empirical research on this topic is rather scarce before 1990, but the foundational research between 1973 and 1990 can provide some interesting insight into the basis of modern student development theories in relation to residence life. Thrasher and Bloland (1989) assembled a review of published empirical research based on student development studies. The purpose of their review was to take a "snapshot of the state of student development research" at the end of two decades of student development theory and practice (547).

The method used in this review was to survey the research literature for every published article, regardless of quality, that reported the implementation and evaluation of a theory-based student development theory intervention program. The researchers set three criteria which each article had to meet: first, the article or study had to reference specifically one or several generally recognized student development theories, and the program in question had to have been grounded in student development theory; second, with student development and theory in mind, a college-level
program intervention had to have been designed and implemented; and third, there must have been a formal evaluation of the program or intervention to determine its effectiveness in bringing about its student development objective (547).

The researchers then divided the studies into two, distinct groups; *intentional interventions* and *incidental interventions*. An intervention was intentional if a new program was specifically designed to bring about student development and included specific projects, developmentally designed career planning and academic courses, and comprehensive student programs (547). An intervention was incidental if the intervention being used to measure student development was one that had been an accepted part of the college experience. These were not designed to influence student development as a primary purpose; any developmental gains were seen as incidental to the program's primary purpose. In either case, the interventions directly or indirectly resulted in the manipulation of residential culture.

Relevant to resident life intentional education/outputs and in the category of *intentional interventions* were what the researchers distinguished as "Developmentally Designed Programs." These studies document four specific programs designed to enhance the student participants' development.

The first article cited in this study was Walsh's (1985). Grounding his research in Sanford's work (1962), he compared a group of sixty freshmen who went through a student development-based orientation and advising experience with a control group of sixty freshmen who did not. Four observable variables in the development of the student were: grades, retention rate, self-concept, and attitudes about the university. The intervention involved self-assessment and development, career planning and development, planning schedules, decision making, and familiarization with campus resources. Results showed that the experimental group achieved higher levels of satisfaction and grade point averages, but no higher levels of self-concept or retention than students in the control group (548).

Schuh and Kuh (1984) studied the effects of student interaction with faculty members in residence halls. Parties were brought together to attend social functions, meals, floor meetings, and intramural events. While there was no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on items reflecting self-reported personal growth over the year, there were clear
signs of attitude changes of faculty and staff involved in the program.

These, in addition to other studies, revealed that developmental programming clearly can encourage a student's psychosocial development, especially in areas of autonomy and sense of purpose. In addition, this review showed that developmental programs may yield significant increases in self-reported growth as well as satisfaction, but have little or no effect on GPA's or retention rates (550).

The second category of studies were classified as incidental interventions. The literature was assigned to four categories: residence hall living, college student activities, the college experience in general, and unclassified interventions- the first three of which are relevant to my study in distinct ways. The literature on residence hall living is clearly important because this is the primary area that the committee is reviewing. In addition, the other two categories provided me with opportunities to integrate further campus experiences into residence hall programs and systems.

Within "Residence Hall Living" literature, we see further information about the effects of residence hall living on students. Welty's (1976) study assembled a group of residence hall and commuting freshmen. They completed selected scales of the Omnibus Personality Inventory, College Student Questionnaire, and the College Experience Questionnaire before entering into the school and after the first semester. Results of the study showed that the groups differed demographically and on thinking, introversion, estheticism, complexity, autonomy, and altruism scales of the Omnibus Personality Inventory. Residence hall students scored higher on scales of intellectual interest, ideas, esthetics, and activities (550). Also, residence hall students were shown to have developed on these measures of intellectual and personal growth more quickly than commuter freshmen.

Pascarella's (1985) study showed that the influence of on-campus living is great and that intellectual and social self-concepts of students are strongly affected by their relationships with faculty and peers. Overall, the study suggested that on-campus living had a positive effect on student development.

The second category of incidental intervention literature was classified as "College Student Activities." The only study among this group that was relevant to my own is Williams and Winston's (1985) research. Their study consisted of an investigation into the differences in
developmental task achievements between students who participated in activities and those who did not. The results suggested that student activity participants scored higher than nonparticipant on scales of interdependence, appropriate educational plans, mature career plans, and mature life-style plans subtasks (551).

The third category of incidental intervention literature is titled "The College Experience." In this group, Thrasher and Bloland looked at the college experience as a unified intervention in itself, including both academic and co-curricular pursuits. Research showed the total college experience as affecting both students' personal and intellectual development. The literature in this group is not particularly important cited individually, but rather, provides keen insight when viewed comprehensively.

Literature involving incidental interventions showed that students living in residence halls were more disposed to intellectual interests, had a higher level of satisfaction with faculty members, and had a larger number of college friendships (552). In addition, on-campus living was found to influence social self-concept. Students involved in activities showed higher scores on scales of interdependence, appropriate education plans, mature career plans, and mature lifestyle plans. Also, programs specializing in personal enrichment and realistic orientation tended to produce higher scores for participants in scales of autonomy, mature interpersonal relationships, and purpose. Other findings indicate that general interaction with faculty and other students helps both personal and intellectual development, and that college helped to improve tolerance and quality of interpersonal relationships.

**Student Development Theory**

Thrasher and Bloland's review called for more empirical research to be done in this area. While such is still rather scarce, there are more recent studies that have been compiled and can provide us with further information about these issues. The next grouping of articles provides us with less study of interventions and more research on actual developmental theories.

Of particular value to my own research was Benjamin Michael's study (1988) of the literature on college residence life, "Residence Life Systems and Student Development: A Critical Review and
Reformulation." This was organized around an ecosystemic model and student development theory. This model distinguished between events and processes at four levels: suprasystem (relationship between residence and university systems); macrosystem (residence hall); mesosystem (the hall floor); and microsystem (the room), with processes across levels seen as interdependent. The model's four levels correspond to the major sections of the review. The review identified eight thematic issues: (1) the residence system is most responsible for student social development; (2) social development precedes and influences academic development; (3) men and women enter with divergent degrees of preparedness; (4) such differences are reflected in their patterns of self-selection (5) social processes at the micro-level drive student development in residences; (6) students relations with their parents have a potent effect on student development; (7) research and programming in residence life requires a differentiated style of thinking; and (8) academic and historical time intervals must be distinguished. These eight areas provide residence life staff direction in recognizing the appropriate issues to be dealt with and the implications that residence life has on the student. This study was, perhaps, the most helpful of the lot because it allowed the Educational Outputs Committee to structure the issues and planning procedure.

Similarly rooted in student development theory was Frances Stage's (1991) article "Residence Hall Staff Use of Student Development Theory" which examined several issues regarding the usefulness of student development theory to professionals and senior level staff in residence halls. Results suggested that student development theory is, in fact, used in residence life. It is noted in its most basic form, that is, the Sanford study of both challenges and supports for the students. This study, however, raised questions about whether the use of such theory is influenced by organizational norms or is a function of such factors as educational background. Stage's article presents a clear illustration of the lens through which current residence life staff could view their interactions with students occupying residence halls. Whether or not the use of this theory is influenced by organizational norms or is a function of such factors as educational background is seemingly insignificant when attempting to understand the most effective medium for reaching students through programming efforts. Such an issue could be construed as helpful in a philosophical sense, that is, in understanding the root of the interaction and whether or not this is the cause of the current limitations of contemporary student development theories.
William Thieke (1994) attempted to validate Chickering's student development theory, applying Chickering's seven vectors to five influences that he found on the student. The seven vectors were: (1) developing competence, (2) managing emotions, (3) developing autonomy, (4) establishing identity, (5) developing more mature interpersonal relationships, (6) clarifying purpose, and (7) developing integrity. Thieke's five influences were: (1) living arrangements, (2) environmental influences, (3) peer experiences, (4) faculty-student interactions, (5) extra-curricular involvement. Thieke's research did, in fact, support Chickering's theory, as developmental change did occur and several of the variables (influences) had significant effects on several developmental measures.

Robert Sitten (1991) looked at the college student who is an adult child from a dysfunctional family, applying Chickering's seven vectors. Each is examined separately to illustrate how the requirements of each task contradict the natural tendencies of the adult child and the environment from which he has come. The study offered residence life professionals seven pieces of advice: (1) set clear limits and boundaries, (2) communicate, (3) instill trust, (4) respect the adult or child experience, (5) encourage involvement, (6) discourage self-abuse, and (7) know one's own limits. Sitten claims that his findings show that by meeting the students where they are and guiding them within a safe and functional environment, residence life professionals can show students that they trust the students to succeed and that they will not reject students if they do not succeed.

To effectively plan for residence life education, this committee had to recognize the role that programming efforts play in developing a community among the residents that extends past normal living circumstances. Davis and Daugherty's (1992) paper, "A Framework for Residence Hall Community Development," addresses the issue of improving student retention and quality of life on campus through the application of principles expressed by Sabre (1980) involving community development. Sabre's principle of nurturing the capacity for mutual persuasion is discussed as a central vision and purpose for organizing and guiding community development in residence hall settings. Davis and Daugherty consider the capacity for mutual persuasion in terms of its effects on shaping student orientations to knowledge, people, and institutions. In essence, this principle provides a basis for balancing what are frequently regarded as mutually exclusive concepts, such as optimism and skepticism, individuality and mutuality, justice and compassion. They recognize that,
as difficult as it may sometimes be to promote, compromise and plurality are necessary qualities of a healthy community. These issues, for the most part, have been identified by the residence life staff and have been integrated into past and current programming models. While the current model will probably not change as a result of this strategic planning, there are methods that will change.

Another Benjamin Michael article (1990) titled, "Freshman Daily Experience: Implications for Policy, Research and Theory," describes a study from the University of Guelph (Ontario, Canada) examining the experiences, concerns and interests of college freshmen. Of 65 entering students who agreed to participate, 37 signed up for the study in September, 1988, with 24 women and 4 men completing all study requirements: completion of a daily diary; bimonthly unstructured interviews with a student services "buddy"; and completion of four standardized instruments concerned with attitudes, values, social development, dynamics of families of origin and perceived levels of stress. The data analysis was aimed at discovering recurrent patterns in participants' reports. This resulted in a total of 36 themes grouped into 3 domains: personal, interpersonal, and environmental. Overall, academic and social processes were apparent within specific environmental contexts on campus, with the most significant context being residence life, where most participants spent the majority of their free time. Participants were noted as seeking a workable balance between the social and the academic, the personal and the impersonal, the affective and the objective. Michael's study is helpful in his indication of a balance being sought by students in their collegiate lives. This gave the committee further insight as to the issues facing students and allowed us to provide suggestions and strategic goals in providing students with the support they need.

Mark Warner (1985) discussed the implications of applying the Wellness model to residence life. Warner says that it can be an effective means of promoting developmental programs in residence halls. He examines this model in terms of marketing, student development theory, and balanced programming. Though Warner's study may be a bit outdated in its use of the Wellness model, his research demonstrates how aspects of the Wellness model can still be used in the development of a positive framework for residence life professionals.

Ralph Johnson (1989) identified various issues to be considered in developing student activities programs that affect all students, including minority groups. His research suggests that program ideas must promote cultural pluralism and constant application of student development
theory. Though Johnson's work is a bit out of the scope of this committee, some of his issues could be integrated into the programming model for Richmond College.

Jan Arminio and Frank Julian (1990) provided a study based on Posner's text, The Leadership Challenge. Ten "commitments of leadership," behaviors utilized by leaders, include search for opportunities, experiment and take risks, envision the future, sell others on the vision, foster collaboration, strengthen others, set the example, plan small wins, recognize individual contributions, and celebrate accomplishments of the group. Arminio and Julian's study is helpful in instilling qualities into the image of the resident assistants, or student leaders, within the residence halls. It also indicates a method by which residence life staff may command the leadership process existing between them and residents.

Henry Durand and Barry Reister (1987) used Hersey/Blanchard's Situational Leadership theory to study the readiness levels of 39 students to learn listening skills, pairing high and low skill groups with high and low structured instruction. Results of the study supported the view that developmental educators should consider individual levels of skill, experience, and motivation when designing programs.

Analysis of Literature

Analysis of this literature suggests many issues that the residence life strategic planning committee should address in constructing the connection between social, intellectual, and residential life through intentional education/outputs—thereby manipulating the culture within the residence life system to provide the needed challenge and support mechanisms that enhance student development. We will examine the findings of the Thrasher and Bloland (1989) review and then proceed into the more recent literature that has emphasized student development theory.

Though the study was conducted in 1989, Thrasher and Bloland's research does address significant issues that should be considered by this committee. The findings of the researchers in the area of intentional interventions showed a potentially powerful role that the residence life system can have in developing students through the implementation of such programs. Students participating in developmentally designed programs scored higher on self-concept and college
satisfaction scales. Involved students also scored higher on autonomy, mature life-style plans, and interdependence subtasks of the SDTI (Thrasher & Bloland, 553). These programs are direct methods of shaping the residential culture and securing a foundation for student development through direct education and programming. Intentional interventions can yield positive reactions from students, thus the activities of the resident life staff can be impactful and could be considered necessary for the creation of an atmosphere that maximizes student development.

Considering such information, this committee sees that one of the necessary paths in making the aforementioned connection lies in student involvement within their community. Students who take an active role within their community serve two vital functions in the success of it; (1) they sustain the community and help to identify new issues to be addressed, that the community could further develop itself, and (2) they participate in the changing residential culture. Part of the development process that students undergo involves the cementing of an identity, both singular in its own volition and purpose, yet essential to the sustenance of the community. The first of these two processes seems to be addressed by Walsh's and Schuh and Kuh's results- that students who are active members of the community have an increased likelihood of advanced development in areas of self-concept and autonomy. Therefore, programs and/or systems recommended by this committee must be implemented to further student participation within their community. The second of these processes indicates the need for guidance through the changing of culture. While it would be impossible for resident life officials to construct a culture that is fixed and completely fulfilling, officials can allow for deviances or evolution of it. This change will be influenced by the residence life staff, yet provided through the changing needs of the student body.

The second part of the Thrasher-Bloland review illustrates incidental interventions. While any action taken by this committee would most likely result in intentional interventions, understanding the incidental implications of past interventions is helpful in assessing the potential outcomes of the newly implemented programs and systems. Their research identified a number of issues that are helpful to this committee. The findings showed that students living in residence halls are more disposed toward intellectual pursuits, and show evidence of having greater influence in the development of a self-concept. Student leaders living on-campus showed increases in their inner/outer directedness, self-actualizing values, existentiality, time competency, and spontaneity
(553). These interventions support the seeming value in on-campus residency and speak to the existing student development processes within such an environment. And, they speak directly to the need for and potential influence of on-going interventions afforded by the residence life system.

Other findings in this area, showed that moral development in college is influenced by initial moral development level as well as by participation in student activities. This is the case as students are faced with more issues pursuant to their involvement with diverse groups. In addition, students gained higher levels of ego identity status and self-confidence. Involvement in student activities also seemed to lead to higher levels of interdependence, appropriate educational plans, mature career plans, and mature lifestyle plans. Involvement with faculty and fellow students led to higher levels of personal and intellectual development.

Results showed that involvement in student activities plays an important role in student development. The creation of environments in which such competencies as self-confidence and career planning can be augmented or developed is part of the goal of student affairs personnel. The residence life staff exists to support the holistic development of its students as they engage in their degree programs. This provides additional support for the notion that the residence life staff must somehow involve the students in shaping the culture of the residence life experience, more so than what is required for daily living. By implementing various activities or responsibilities into the residence life system, perhaps there will be a greater number of students affected positively by such an experience.

The more recent literature on student development theory was extremely helpful in creating a structure for this committee's planning process and strategy. Michael's study (1988) established four levels of events or processes in which student development occurs. This structured my committees method of addressing the various issues and barriers to making the connection between social, intellectual, and residential life on this campus. Michael's study also highlights the current role that the residence system plays in student social development, which, in turn, precedes and influences academic development. Again, this is helpful in establishing the causation or influence chain that exists in the effectuation of student competencies.

Johnson (1989), Davis and Daugherty (1992), and Warner (1985) each contribute to possible variations that this committee could have taken in its own understanding of student development.
Johnson's suggestions for culturally pluralistic programs is helpful at this stage of the planning. It is the notion of culturally pluralistic programming that has helped guide this committee's planning efforts. Johnson's research is further supported by the work of Davis and Daugherty and their calling for the promotion of compromise and plurality within a healthy community. Warner's Wellness model also identifies other issues not previously considered and in need of greater exploration.

Using leadership theories to better understand and develop residence life systems was also helpful to the committee in its planning efforts. Arminio and Julian's research (1990) and Durand and Reister's (1987) study both provided new paradigms from which the residence life staff can view the residence life student development process. For example, utilizing the ten commitments of leadership, as based upon Posner's text, makes for a creative approach to training student affairs personnel and residence life staff. The fundamental lesson in regard to this committee's purpose involves the consideration of individual levels of skill, experience, and motivation when designing programs for students. This was evidenced in both studies and can certainly be implemented into the programming model resulting from this committee's proposals.

Because the means of reaching the students are framed as educational outputs, such issues as self-concept and autonomy (identified in Walsh's study) could be construed as teachable competencies and behaviors. This is certainly an arguable point, and one that could interfere in the understanding of this entire process. However, it is put to rest in comprehending the nature of student development theory as applied to residence life systems; that is, such qualities can be discovered in the creation of an environment that is conducive to such exploration. The creation of such an environment is primarily the responsibility of the residence life staff, or at least, they have the ability to direct such change efforts. It would seem, however, that the true power to make this change lies in the student population; thus, they must be involved in the process of creating and influencing this environment and maintaining or shaping the residential culture.

**Assembling Data**

The problems presented to the Educational Outputs committee are rooted in discovering the most effective method of data collecting so as to implement an effective plan according to both
students (residents) and staff. Cash's paper, entitled "Using a Standing Poll Panel to Monitor the Pulse of the Campus" discusses the results of a randomly selected standing poll panel implemented at Saint Mary's College at Notre Dame, Indiana, called PRISM (Prompt Response to Improve Saint Mary's). This presents an intriguing concept of a student advisory board which would monitor residence hall activity and make suggestions as to improvement. PRISM was designed to quickly ascertain the attitudes and opinions of a panel of 120 college students through the use of surveys that have included residence life and safety and security issues. Cash's paper discusses the development of the program and analyzes the results after three semesters of operation. Procedures for quickly constructing a survey, obtaining responses, and processing results are described. Results are provided to the senior officer group and to the appropriate administrative entity usually within two weeks of the survey's administration. Program evaluation results are presented, indicating that both college administrators and students appreciated the opportunity to utilize the panel as one of several methods of student-college communication.

By utilizing similar research approaches, the Richmond College Residence Life Staff could have ascertained a significant amount of data that might not have been collected through its current methods. The logical extension of such a project would be the equivalent of one large focus group, comprised of students and staff that would allow for greater input into residence life planning. This approach may be adapted for use in the Richmond College residence life program. The PRISM panel seems to have addressed many needs that students have that could be filled through residence life support mechanisms. To ensure the success of such a program, this group would have to address established campus groups and seek input from a variety of individuals who are recognized as having different needs and different social habits. We found such a group as having a potentially powerful role on a larger campus, however, given the size of this University, the group would most likely be impotent as a long term company.
Chapter 3

Committee Activities

Format

We structured the committee's brainstorming sessions into the four levels outlined by Michael's (1988) study. We were trying to find how our intentional education or other outputs could affect student development at each of the following four levels: (1) between the residential complex and the institution, (2) among the building as residential units, (3) among the distinct floors or sections of buildings, and (4) within each resident's room. Such a method proved to be successful, however, there were often deviations in the organized path we had created simply due to the nature of the issues identified. Some overlapped into other areas while others simply were not relevant to our sub-committee's agenda.

The committee worked according to Bryson's five part process of strategic planning. The process is outlined as follows: (1) What are the practical alternatives, "dreams" or visions we might pursue to address this strategic issue? (2) What are the barriers to the realization of these alternatives, dreams or visions? (3) What major proposals might we pursue to achieve these alternatives, dreams or visions directly or to overcome the barriers to their realization? (4) What major actions with existing staff must be taken within the next year to implement the major proposals? (5) What specific steps must be taken within the next six months to implement the major proposals and who is responsible? This format walked us through the process of creating a proposal that would fit in with the proposals submitted by the other sub-committees in the creation of a consolidated plan.

Committee meetings

Serving on the committee were Dr. John Roush, Dean Richard Mateer, Brent Damrow, John Unice, and myself. One additional member was asked to join the committee and responded affirmatively, yet was absent for every meeting. His presence would have been helpful to us as his insight was unique to the rest of the committee as a minority student. To understand the social
processes that occurred within the group dynamics, we must become more familiar with the members of the sub-committee.

Dr. John Roush is the Vice-President for Planning. He clearly held a position of leadership among our group, both positionally and because of his experience with effective strategic planning. He assisted President Morrill in the creation of Engagement in Learning and his knowledge of that plan was helpful in keeping our own committee within the guidelines that the plan set forth. His knowledge and insight was helpful but his commitment to the group itself was minimal. He was not a regular attendant of our meetings and we certainly missed his contributions. On the flip side, his involvement with this committee was a good political move for the residence life team in that, when the final goals have been submitted as part of the strategic plan, he will identify with the cause and, hopefully, assist in and support these endeavors.

Dr. Richard Mateer is the Dean of Richmond College. His knowledge of residence life at this University is unmatched and his wisdom provided us with direction. I found the Dean to hold a perspective that was grounded in reality. In my relationship with him prior to the formation of this committee (he is the head of the residence life staff that I am on), I had typically found his demands or opinions to have very little pragmatic sensibility. However, after discussing the problems with our residence life system, I found his ideas to be the product of deep thought and examination. The Dean also has substantial knowledge in the student development theories and is a strong proponent of the residence life staff's necessity in the student development process.

Brent Damrow is the Assistant Dean of Richmond College and the Director of Chemical Health. Brent was extremely helpful to me in organizing these meetings and facilitating discussion. Because I joined the Strategic Planning Committee at its halfway point (as noted in the Bryson text), my comfort level was low and my knowledge of what had occurred and where this committee was to be going was minimal. Brent informed me on what I missed and what was expected of the various sub-committees. He is the head of the residence Life Strategic Planning Committee and it was he that knew the ultimate direction that this sub-committee was to take.

John Unice is a senior Leadership major. He was the President of the Inter-Fraternity Council and has been an active participant in the student Administration of the Greek life on this campus. His perspective was important to our group both as a Greek and as a student leader. John
was a bit unfamiliar with the goals of our sub-committee but was extremely thoughtful and creative in his deliberations of potential interventions that the committee could implement into the plan. John's input was very valuable to the as his perspective was partially shaped by his extractions from the Greek system as well as his own academic pursuits. Because John has been so successful in his four years at this University, this committee has gained a significant amount of helpful information through understanding his own development, as a student and as a person.

I am a senior Leadership major. The perspective that I brought to this committee was primarily one of a student residence life staff member. I am in my third year as a resident assistant and have served as thus in both the residence halls and the University Forest Apartments. My knowledge of student development theory is minimal, however I am well-versed in the practical. Also, my experience as an athlete of the University has affected my response to the culture of the University. I assisted Brent in the chairing of this subcommittee.

This committee met on four different occasions. For the most part, the meetings were organized brainstorming sessions. They were mildly productive and resulted in a rather thorough examination of residence life intentional educational/outputs. The composition of this group introduced a complicated power dynamic that had the potential to severely inhibit the group's productiveness. To assure that this did not interfere with our creativity and decision-making process, numerous adjustments were made to make the facilitation of ideas more productive. Such interventions included a casual, non-threatening atmosphere in which ideas were discussed openly and each was given serious consideration. Because of the various responsibilities and degrees of influence that each member brought to this group, we found that by giving each person notecards to be filled-out individually in regard to suggested interventions within the respective system (Michaels, 1988), people contributed with less apprehension. For example, if John had an idea about student development within the macrosystem (residence hall as an entity), he could write it on the notecard to be read aloud with the other notecards from the other members. This would cause him less concern about how his idea fit into the expectations or ideas that Dean Mateer had in regard to the same system. This method proved effective and provided us with a number of interesting and diverse concerns and suggestions.
Committee findings

Following our second meeting, our committee had identified a number of opportunities for how our intentional education/outputs could affect student development at each of the four aforementioned levels.

The first level examined was the residential interaction with the University. We found that the residential halls may serve as an identifier for students. This identity may be supportive for individual students, however we must be aware of how specific identities may further contribute to divisiveness on a divided campus. In addition to an identifier, the residential halls may serve as educational environments. Residences may be conduits for information flowing to residents. Community centers in each building could promote student engagement with the institution. Programs may be presented which break down the barriers between halls and the rest of the institution- "avenues for exploring deeper issues." Residences may facilitate interaction with Westhampton College. This could be social interaction and could allow for a focus on gender issues. And, residence halls could serve to facilitate the interest of the students in University athletics and other spirit producing ventures.

The second level examined was the Residence Hall/ University Forest Apartment Identity. The committee found that residential units may provide various types of support for students. Such support mechanisms could include the creation of more themed housing areas. The themes would respond to personal/academic values and interests. Residential units may also provide the foundation for interpersonal relationships. Students need to think of their residences as a "home away from home." A sense of fellowship may be created through organized activities such as athletics or academic pursuits. Mentoring programs may provide for the development of specific interpersonal relationships. In addition, residential units may provide the foundation for community relationships. These relationships would issue challenges to students to develop a sense of compromise and plurality. Residents should have the opportunity to participate in a "true community" where they are held accountable for a particular function within the residence and would contribute as such. This "true community" would increase personal growth as well as a
responsibility of thought. The resulting leadership opportunities would shape the identity of the residential unit. And, there must be tools available to identify other residents in the building who may serve as support structures for individual students.

The third level examined was the floor/block-based identity. We found that the floor may serve as a site for the development of more intimate relationships, thus creating a foundation for more profound support structures. Because this involves a lower number of students, such a level would be conducive to specific events which may develop a stronger bond among residents. The floor/block level provides a site for the exploration of deeper, higher risk discussions. These discussions should be encouraged and facilitated by student staff who is appropriately prepared. Pre-packaged programs for staff on various issues may facilitate knowledge-based explorations. Also, in the development of floor communities, residents may be empowered to seek additional regulations for their own community.

The fourth level examined was the Room/Unit Identity. We found that the room should serve as a location for academic preparation. It should be comfortable and be conducive to productivity. Furniture, lighting, and fixtures are important to this end. The room also serves as a location for stress relief and relaxation. It is a location for students to implement their life philosophies. Especially for new students, the room may serve to challenge students in a profound way to learn to work and live with those who may be different from themselves. The committee also understood that excessive support for the development of individual rooms/units may lead to isolationism.

The committee identified numerous challenges to the implementation of the aforementioned objectives. We recognized that existing developing cliques could destroy the fabric of the community. The University currently has inadequate facilities, such as common space and comfort levels within rooms/units. There exists an inherent difficulty in getting to know fellow residents. There are not enough "cool" opportunities for interaction, that is, not enough avenues acceptable to the students. Residents may not feel enough ownership over their living environments. Old attitudes may not be conducive to change. The implementation of new programs will be competing for student time and attention with other activities. In regard to the establishment of non-policy student developed rules, responding to violations could be problematic. Some proposals may lead to divisiveness which may become a barrier. And, there exists a desperate need for increased levels
of individualism and personal responsibility.

The committees' final meeting identified prospective objectives which could address the various issues offered by the second meetings' deliberations. In regard to the Residential Interaction with the University, the committee suggested several ways that residential units may serve as educational environments. Seminars may be offered for credit (team taught PCA/staff) for members of each building or class focusing on student development in light of world events that are academically and historically relevant. If the money is available, perhaps the University could provide grants/partial scholarships by hall for particular students' academic pursuits and research.

Also, as means to establishing residential units as links to other facets of the University community, the creation of common identifiable characteristics would allow resident people to connect and get involved beyond the hall. Vibrant community centers which promote upcoming University or building events could be placed in the halls. Halls could have budgets set aside for student staff to use, specifically for the purpose of having speakers to address issues that are both historically and academically relevant. Perhaps professors could be invited to discuss their current research or publications. There should be more hall interaction with campus life—maybe collaborate with another hall to sponsor speakers or throw parties.

The hall identity could be enhanced through several avenues. Residential units may provide various types of support for students by providing the ability for students to retain a space in their current building based on community identity and governance assists in supporting the students' development. In considering the residential units as identifiers for students, more attractive and usable common space could promote resident interactions.

The residential units may provide the foundation for community relationships in numerous ways. A directory could be created for a hall that would promote more resident interaction (tutoring, mentoring, etc.). This level may be required to create large sport events or athletic teams, particularly focusing on first year students. Residential home pages or data banks could be created for each building/block which provides brief biographical sketches and information about residents. Hall competitions—anything from community service hours to academics to athletics could be rewarded.

At the floor/block identity level, this committee identified two ways in which the floor may
serve as a site for the development of more intimate relationships. Names of residents could be sent to the resident assistant during the summer to facilitate advance communication (letter, phone call, etc.). This could be used to develop a method of helping to establish a floor identity before the year even begins. Also, the floor may provide an ideal setting to bring all members of a given floor or section together to reduce the perception that "there is no one like me." This may be especially important for men who may be quiet and may not be affiliated with a men's social fraternity.

The floor can be a site for the exploration of deeper, higher risk discussions through the formation of discussion groups, particularly with first year students on current issues affecting them. Also, the development of educational resources which staff may utilize to direct conversations on high risk topics could assist in this capacity.

In the development of floor communities, residents may be empowered to seek additional regulations for their community. Students may vote on rules for the floor/block with the resident assistant. The resident assistant could then bring the rules to the staff meeting and compare them to the rules decided upon by other floors. Conflicts would then be resolved in this process and the rules would be enforced by the members of the floor and, ultimately, the resident assistant (this therefore has implications for the residence hall also). Residents of the floor could also be responsible for the design and implementation of programs for the floor.

The room/unit identity can be enhanced in a number of ways. The room may serve as a location for academic preparation. If a site for academic preparation is to be achieved, residents need to agree to a standard for behavior that will allow such preparation to occur. If standards are violated, residents need to respond. Furniture and lighting should be more conducive to computer work, group study, and comfortable reading.

The room serves as a location for students to implement their life philosophy. During renovations, the school should provide furniture and lighting which is more comfortable, more suited to group discussion and socializing and which better supports advances in technology. Systems should be implemented which more effectively and consistently hold students accountable for their decisions. Roommate competitions could be provided to recognize the best combined GPA's, service record, intramural participation, etc..

Especially for new students, the room may serve to challenge students in a profound way to
learn to work and live with those who may be different from themselves. In regard to this, structured roommate conversations should be encouraged to allow residents to reach agreement on release of stress vs academic preparation issues, guest policies and so forth.

This is a full account of the issues mentioned previously and the avenues in which these issues could be addressed within the plan. However, as will be shown in the resulting proposal, while some issues were taken directly from the deliberations, some were combined into other groupings and others were completely disregarded.
Chapter 4

Committee's Proposal

The following is the proposal submitted by my sub-committee. It was co-authored by Brent Damrow and myself pursuant to the suggestions and recommendations that were made by Dean Mateer, John Unice, Dr. Roush, and ourselves. This proposal will be joined with the three proposals constructed by the other committees. This compilation will then be submitted in a revised form as the strategic plan for Richmond College residence life.

Intentional Education/Outputs

Overall Premise:

The Richmond College Dean’s Office exists to support the holistic development of its students as they engage in their degree programs. To this end, the residence life system seeks to provide a forum allowing for the enhancement of personal development in the context of other students, the University community and the world beyond. Nevitt Sanford postulates that, “the institution which would lead an individual toward greater development must, then, present him with strong challenges, appraise accurately his ability to cope with challenges, and offer him support when they become overwhelming.” (Sanford, Self and Society 1966, p 46). The residential system within Richmond College seeks to offer challenges through educational programming, giving residents the responsibility for the development of a true community and through adherence to community developed codes of conduct. It is also recognized, however, that residence life must support students not only through the challenges offered by the residential system, but also the challenges extended through the academic nature of the institution as a whole, the separation of students from their primary support group of family and friends, as well as the changing dynamics of the world surrounding the University of Richmond.

There are four levels at which this challenge and support process may occur within a residential setting. Each resident occupies a specific space within the system. Whether this is a
traditional residence hall room or an apartment and whether it is shared with other students or not, this space provides a location for residents to implement their life philosophies, provides a challenge (especially for new students) to relate to those who may be different from themselves, and serves as a location for academic preparation. Each of these spaces is part of a distinct floor, section or block. This larger unit provides a site for the development of intimate relationships and for the exploration of deeper or higher risk issues as well as providing an opportunity for residents to determine acceptable norms to which they will hold each other and themselves accountable. Each of these sections are combined to create a building or residential area. These even larger units provide the foundation for community relationship and may provide various types of options and support for residents. Finally, the entire system interacts with the larger institution and in doing so provides identity for residents, an educational environment and a link to other established communities within the institution. These four levels are directly related to the four systems identified by Benjamin Michaels (1988). Also, the processes and events occurring within these four systems must be understood as interdependent.

Objective Number One:

One mechanism which may provide significant support for residents is the community of peers in which they live. The development of meaningful relationships with individuals and the responsibility of being a productive member of a community help residents to redefine individual support systems and to develop new cognitive, moral and intellectual frameworks for understanding the world in which they live.

Engagement in Learning accurately assesses the “ability to feel part of a place, to belong, to find friends, to be valued by one’s peers...are fundamental needs” (p 37b) for students. Both Maslow and Chickering hypothesized that certain tasks or needs must be fulfilled before individuals can begin working toward the fulfillment of deeper needs and tasks. These fundamental needs must be met in order for residents to feel the support necessary to accept higher levels of challenges.

To this end, the Richmond College Dean’s Office will seek to implement specific
mechanisms to facilitate the development of both individual and community relationships between residents. In the development of individual relationships, the foundation shall rest within the residents’ rooms.

**Recommendation #1** - First year students will participate in structured conversations which will allow residents to reach agreement on fundamental issues including the need to balance stress relief with academic preparation issues, guest policies, personal needs and so forth. In addition, a reward system will be developed to recognize the combined accomplishments of roommate pairs in the areas of academics, service, intramurals...

Beyond the room, however, steps will need to be taken which ensures that the residence hall setting offers opportunities for students to “interact with their peers with greater regularity and intensity” (Hughes, p 190). The floor may serve as the ideal setting to bring all members together to:

**Recommendation #2** - Reduce the perception that “there is no one like me”. The Resident Assistant for the given floor or section should be provided with the means and the encouragement to initiate such contact before the year even begins and to reinforce this notion once the school year begins.

The building or residential area, on the other hand, may serve to create an ongoing series of community relationships for residents and institute the traditions necessary to expand these supportive relationships beyond the circle of individuals residents may encounter on daily basis.

**Recommendation #3** - Comprehensive directories for each building providing biographical sketches of each resident should be created which will allow residents instant and cross-referenced access. These directories should provide more than mere demographic information, they should provide information regarding
academic interests and resources, social perspectives and interest inventories.

As the residence halls are merely one aspect of the larger institution, so too should these steps ultimately lead to a greater interaction between the residents of the Richmond College residence halls and University Forest Apartments and the faculty, staff and other students of the university.

**Recommendation #4-** Purposeful interaction should be encouraged with Westhampton residential units to develop relationships across the lines of gender. Furthermore, vibrant community centers should alert residents to the opportunities on campus and encourage participation in a diverse set of offerings.

In the end, the fulfillment of these fundamental needs and the establishment of a common sense of purpose and identity among residents should encourage students to accept greater levels of challenge.

**Objective Number Two:**

As residents become prepared to accept greater challenges in their development as individuals and community members, the staff of Richmond College must be prepared to accept their role as educators through the presentation of educational experiences. While all residential communities share certain general purposes in regard to the provision of safety, social opportunities and a larger community purpose, higher education communities are clearly unique in their role of facilitating an academic or intellectual pursuit among its members. Specifically, utilizing the close personal relationship which exist within rooms and floors, Richmond College shall:

**Recommendation #5-** Encourage the development of regular discussion groups
which may respond to spiritual needs, help residents to explore world events from multiple perspectives and tackle high risk topics about which residents may be hesitant to explore with unfamiliar individuals. To this end, the professional staff must develop resources to help student staff achieve a working knowledge of such issues.

At the larger building level, such intentional efforts and interventions will need to compete for student attention due to the myriad of student offerings and involvement across campus.

**Recommendation #6**- An effective team approach to education will need to enlist student staff, residential governing systems and faculty resources to motivate student involvement. As residential units develop a sense of identity, effective assessment techniques will be vital in order to design and execute quality programming which will justify student time and attention.

Finally these efforts will need to not only bring the classroom into the residence hall, but encourage residents to bring their newly found understanding of themselves and the world into the context of the academic arena. Students should be inspired and motivated by the accomplishment of fellow students and the faculty of the institution, while also finding mechanisms for providing their input to those around them.

**Recommendation #7**- Faculty and students should regularly share (in an intentional manner) results of research, new thoughts from writings and plans for the exploration of new topics. Forums for such interaction shall be available within residential units so as to incorporate such activity into the residential experience.

**Recommendation #8**- Richmond College seminars should be instructed by both faculty and staff for members of particular buildings or graduating classes which
focus on student development in the light of world events. These seminars should not only provide traditional academic incentives (credits, marks), but should be required for the attainment of a Richmond College diploma.

Objective Number Three:

While the residential units of Richmond College provide a wholeness to student life, they also exist to provide a solid foundation for the pursuit of academic and intellectual pursuits. As the distinguishing aspect of collegiate cultures is the formal and regular academic functions, one tool to measure the success of any aspect of the University will be the degree to which it prepares students for the classroom. While faculty must also understand their role in bringing a wholeness to academic inquiry, residential units should strive to focus the holistic student development towards the successful retention and engagement of students in the academic arena of the institution. Through the utilization of individual relationships this may be accomplished by:

**Recommendation #9-** The development of peer tutoring and mentoring systems. Just as students educate one another in the social traditions and cultures of the institution, so to should they provide valuable advice and support in the aggressive pursuit of academic inquiry. The residential system must not only provide the mechanism for such interpersonal contact, it must actively reward and support such systems.

As the distinguishing role of this institution is academic in nature, the residential systems can also resonate student involvement in academic pursuits.

**Recommendation #10-** Community centers and direct educational efforts should provide information on institutional resources and offerings of an academic variety.
**Recommendation #11-** Hall-based grants for research and other academic pursuits should be provided with the expectation of the sharing of new knowledge for the benefit of the entire hall.

Through the successful accomplishment of the above, the residential units become not only educational, they provide the “context for participation in a community of purpose” (Engagement, p 37b).

**Objective Number Four:**

The development of a true community requires the ability for residents to shape their own destinies within the established parameters of the University’s mission. As Vincent Tinto postulated, students need to feel a direct sense of involvement in the institution. This involvement must be more than peripheral, it must be clear to the participant, that his effort and involvement has genuine impact upon the larger culture of the institution. This objective is achieved through student participation in government, activist organizations and University boards. This same level of involvement needs to be shared in the residential settings. At the floor and building level,

**Recommendation #12-** Residents should be empowered to work, discuss and create expectations for student conduct which meets the needs and interests of the residents. Once such expectations are agreed upon, residents should be encouraged to shoulder the burden of confronting one another for violations.

While residents should be encouraged to develop additional policies which reflect the unique character of each unit, it also remains clear that while standard University regulations provide a foundation for respectful interaction, not all students may desire their existence or support their principles. In the implementation of individual life philosophies students may make decisions which violate the rules and regulations that current residents had little to do with
Recommendation #13: Residence Life staff must explore ways to ensure consistency and effectiveness in the confrontation and documentation of policy statement violations.

Finally, a community needs to have mechanisms for expressing itself through tradition, celebration and common events. True student engagement requires not only involvement in the creation of rules and regulations, but the ability to recognize the existence of a community.

Recommendation #14: Residents of a given section/building/area should be entrusted as part of a team to contribute to the educational and social development of the residents of the given unit. To this end, the development of individual building or area identities may play a crucial role. Residents should be empowered to both create “themed” housing as well as design mechanisms to encourage the continuation of these developed communities.

Objective Number Five:

The residential system also is a physical entity. While it must provide for basic needs of shelter, security and other physical needs, it must also be tuned to the more subtle needs involved with social interaction, academic achievement, physical comfort and productivity. A proposal is currently being considered by the Board of Trustees which would address some of the larger common space needs. Residence Life should continually examine ways to improve the physical environment. Part of this physical environment is shaped and dictated by the technological innovations of the modern world. These needs must be met both within each room and throughout the physical campus. Specifically rooms as both a site for productivity and as a location for the care of individual needs should:
Recommendation #15 - Provide furniture, lighting and climate control systems more conducive to computer work, group study and interaction.

The successful development of community interaction will require a proper understanding of the technology students use to relate to one another.

Recommendation #16 - Home pages should be utilized to provide comprehensive data on buildings, residents and community events. Better common space will then be required to implement the relationships that this technology may help to create.

Summary:

The Richmond College Residence Life program has a definite role to play in creating and shaping the culture of its residence. It is part of the on-going leadership process that exists and functions in this collegiate context. As part of a larger system this culture also provides input to and receives direction from the larger institution. By better understanding our own roles and the needs of those around us, we will be most effective in this capacity.
Chapter 5

Richmond College Residence Life Strategic Plan

To be added to this report upon completion of the plan.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has identified relevant research to student development within a college setting, analyzed this material, and has used it in support of the recommendations made by my sub-committee. The concept of culture has been identified in the context of resident-staff interaction and has been shown as affected through the use of interventions that enhance student development. Research by Schein and Astin have shown us how culture is most directly manipulated through the work of a leader, in this case the residence life staff. If the concept of leadership as distinguished from management and administration is to have any value, we must recognize the centrality of this culture management function in the leadership process (Schein, 2).

Throughout this process, I have gained insight into the existing process that is occurring within the interaction of students and their culture, as created and manipulated through the residence life staff's activities. Organizational culture is shaped both intentionally and incidentally in the process of student development. Both forms of interventions assist in the growth of those students affected by the interventions implemented by the residence life system. Thus, when viewed holistically, the interaction between residents and residence life staff members could be construed as leadership and the context that this occurs within could be seen as the culture created and developed by the staff- as offered within this committee's resulting proposal.
References


