

SEAHO

SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING OFFICERS

SUMMER 2025



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**Next SEAHO Report
submission deadline
is September 29th, 2025**

Editorial Information:

SEAHO Editors
seahoreport@seaho.org

Mailing Information
Available Upon Request

SEAHO Report Editorial Policy:

All members of SEAHO institutions are encouraged to submit articles for publication. Articles should be typed and can be submitted through the SEAHO website at <http://www.seaho.org/general/custom.asp?page=seahoreportssubmit> or e-mailed to the SEAHO Editors. Be sure to include the author's name and institution, and SEAHO committee or task force affiliation as appropriate. Photographs or other camera-ready graphics are welcomed. Material that has been submitted to other publications is discouraged. Any questions should be referred to the *SEAHO Report* Editor or State Representatives.

Materials not received on time or not used due to space limitations will be considered for the next issue if still timely. Necessary editorial revisions will be made to ensure publication quality and to meet space requirements. Permission is granted to reproduce portions of the contents, but credit to the *SEAHO Report* is required.

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Hello SEAHO Friends,

It's August—which, in our world, means show time! For many of us, we are back in the whirlwind of move-in, icebreakers, duty calls, and welcome events... and let's be honest, folks outside our work life probably won't see us much until after Labor Day! But in the midst of the chaos, there's also so much joy: the wide-eyed excitement of our first-year RAs, the proud moment when our departments shine as the heartbeat of campus life, and the buzz of students returning to our halls. In short—Happy New Year!

Since our last newsletter, SEAHO has been full steam ahead. Here's a quick look at what's been happening around the region:



- **SEAHO 2026 Conference Planning:** The host committee met in Winston-Salem and continued laying the foundation for an amazing event. With the theme *"Illuminate and Innovate"*, you can already see their creative energy shining through. I'm confident this team is building something special!
- **RELI 2025:** North Carolina State University welcomed us for year two of their three-year hosting commitment, and they rolled out the red carpet. Thirty-six participants, nine faculty members, and two dedicated co-chairs experienced a memorable week of learning, connection, and growth. Huge thanks to our NC State colleagues for their hospitality!
- **Executive Board Summer Meeting:** Our team gathered at my home campus - George Mason University. It was a productive time of planning, decision-making, and building stronger bonds.
- **Governing Council Updates:** In July, the Governing Council met and reviewed the draft of the SEAHO Strategic Plan, thanks to the continued support of our planning partners at Brailsford & Dunlavey. Stay tuned for more to come!
- **Campus Home.Live! (CHL):** Many of us had the pleasure of attending this year's ACUHO-I conference in Columbus, Ohio—home of the ACUHO-I central office—and I was proud to represent SEAHO. From presentations to networking and leadership, our region showed up and showed out! I also had the chance to meet with other regional presidents, and let me tell you—*SEAHO continues to be the region others look up to*. Here are just a few of the SEAHO shout-outs from CHL:
 - Parthenon Award Winners: Congratulations to Allan Blattner (UNC-Chapel Hill) and Lionel Maten (University of Mississippi)—two of only five recipients of ACUHO-I's highest honor.
 - Dissertation of the Year: Dr. Ana Hernandez (University of South Florida)
 - Outstanding Graduate Student: Benjamin Michael Dadzie (Clemson University)

Let's also celebrate more SEAHO news:

- Our **Conference Site Selection Team** is hard at work scouting future locations for 2028, 2029, and 2030! Led by Dei Allard (Southern Miss), the team includes Dr. Zach Blackmon (Wake Forest), Michelle Safewright (Middle Tennessee State), and Dante Hill (Southern Miss).
- We've selected **Bree Gates (University of Mississippi)** as our **Conference Coordinator for SEAHO 2028**—she'll also serve on the site selection committee.

Looking ahead:

- Applications for hosting **RELI 2027–2030** and for the **2026–2027 RELI Co-Chair** will open this fall. Keep an eye out in September for more information!
- And yes—*now* is the perfect time to submit a **program proposal** for SEAHO 2026. We're especially eager to highlight topics from Facilities, Assignments, and Operations this year. If that's your area—step up and share your expertise!

As the academic year kicks off, please remember that **SEAHO is your professional home**. Whether you need support, inspiration, or a place to celebrate the wins—big or small—we're here for you. And as always, if there's anything I can do to help you feel more connected to SEAHO, don't hesitate to reach out.

Let's make this year one to remember!

With SEAHO Pride,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Shannon N. Jordan".

Shannon N. Jordan, Ed. D.

SEAHO President, 2025-2026

Happy End of Summer, SEAHO!

The distance between the Spring Edition and Summer Edition is both a few weeks and literal months! By the time the majority of you are reading this, we're on the other side of our Training Marathon and on the brink of opening! For me, someone who is deeply "territorial", introverted and a home-body, training pushes me to the brink of my "outgoing" threshold and into my energy reserves like nothing else. Opening, on the other hand, tends to revitalize me. There is something so exciting about seeing so many students who are excited to be at your institution. The possibilities are, as they say, limitless!



My goal going into my "Editor-ship" was to see broader article geography, representing all ten of our fabulous states and to see more article submissions in general. I am so happy to say, continuing a positive trend, Edition Two of 2025 is adding to both of these goals. We have seen an increase in article submissions, which is so fantastic to see! As a result of these submissions, we have an amazing Edition for you! We have received many articles, each invoking thought and reflection on where we've been as a region and where we want to go. All through the power of our experience and expertise.

It's important to recognize when recognition is due! This is the first Edition of our 2025 Editorial Committee, and they're phenomenal y'all!



Cynthia Moberly
Wofford College



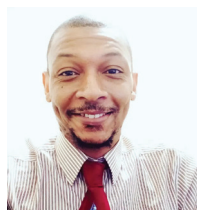
Jackson Pickard
George Mason University



Caitlyn Bolduc
Coastal Carolina University



Joseph Welsh
Christopher Newport University



Andrew Worth
Claflin University



David "Budders" Laird
University of Tennessee - Knoxville



Colleen Arnett
Bellarmine University



Isabelle Page
University of Mississippi



Amy Lorenz
University of North Florida



Kara Alsbaugh
Louisiana State University



Nicole Solomon
Rollins College



Tré Brown
Kennesaw State University



Sage Messenger
East Carolina University

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jillian Webber".

Jillian Webber

SEAHO Report Editor

Appalachian State University

seahoreport@seaho.org

SEAHO 2026 Proposal Submission Reminders

Now that most of us are on the other side of summer training, it's time to take advantage of the time you have to prepare your SEAHO 2026 Conference Program Proposal Submission:

1. Find a co-presenter and reach out to them to discuss your session idea
2. How can you align your topic idea with the conference theme, "Illuminate-Innovate"
3. Outline your session
4. Determine strategies for how to make your session engaging and applicable to your target audience

Still unsure?

Check out our [Creating a Successful Program Proposal](#)

Review an [Example Program Proposal](#)

Explore [Program Topic Areas](#)

Sage Advice

Lessons from the Geese

So if you are a professional of a certain age, you may remember DISCUSS@housing.msstate.edu, this is where we got much needed information and advice before social media and the common person's internet. This lesson came from Ken Peress who in October of 1995 was at Susquehanna University and referred to himself as Father Goose. I did not know him, but I loved the "post" he shared to the listserv. I am down with simple, eloquent, and inspiring sayings where I don't have to agree with everything but can find a pearl of wisdom. Leave it to nature to show you the way. I hope you too will find a pearl and share it.

Follow the way of the geese.

One: As each goose flap its wings it creates an "uplift" for the birds following. Flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if the bird flew alone. Lesson: People who share a common direction and community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

Two: When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it. Lesson: If we are smart like the geese, we will stay in formation with those headed where we want to go and be willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

Three: When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position. Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. With people, as with geese, we are interdependent on each other's skill, capabilities and unique arrangement of gifts, talents or resources.

Four: The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. Lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging.

Five: When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it can fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own with another

formation or catch up with the flock. Lesson: If we are smart like geese, we too will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.

From Milton Olsen, a naturalist, as told by Angeles Arien.

RELI

This past June, thirty-six participants, nine faculty members and two co-facilitators arrived at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC for the Regional Entry-Level Institute (RELI). The institute took place from Monday to Saturday and the participants learned about a variety of topics that impact entry level staff and are critical to their success in reaching the next level. The presentations included topics on assessment, crisis management, life after living on campus. Something new this year featured one faculty member presenting on a new topical area, legal issues and human resources. When the participants were not in formal presentations, they participated in roundtable discussions, faculty lead panels and one on ones with their assigned faculty. RELI ended with a graduation ceremony as a way to celebrate all the learning that took place during the week.

RELI also offered the participants and faculty an opportunity to see capital city, Raleigh, North Carolina. They were also able to see what NC State has to offer their residents, faculty and staff. The NC State University Housing team rolled out the red carpet and ensured that the participants were able to have experiences that are distinctly Raleigh. From eating at the on campus ice creamery, *The Howling Cow*, to getting an opportunity to try the famous *OBX Kettle Cooked Chips*., RELI participants were able to feel like an official member of the Wolfpack. The NC State team also took the participants to restaurants downtown and other local points of interest.

Dr. April Barnes, Assistant Vice President of University Housing, at the University of South Carolina and Dr. Natalie Reckard, Director of Residence Life, at Florida Gulf Coast University had the pleasure of serving as this year's co-facilitators for RELI. April provided Natalie with a lot of good guidance and mentorship in leading the RELI experience, as April will be rolling off as co-chair for the upcoming year. Natalie already has some ideas on how RELI could become even more intentional for next year. If you are interested in being involved as a RELI participant or faculty member, please do not hesitate to reach out to RELI@seaho.org. Applications for faculty will open in the Fall and applications for participants will open in the Spring.



Assessment & Research Committee

2025 SEAHO Annual Conference Evaluation Analysis

Committee Chair: Hallie Bowen, North Carolina State University

Committee Chair Select: Rachel Mungovan, University of South Carolina

Committee Member Contributors:

- Bonnie Brackett
- Lex Milidantri-O'Brien
- Tori Hogarth
- Becki Bury
- Michael Chavers
- Christian Robinson

SEAHO 2025 Summary

The 2025 SEAHO Annual Conference Evaluation had eighty (80) respondents representing professionals from all levels at institutions of all sizes from all 10 SEAHO Region states. This analysis includes percentage breakdowns for each of the 27 questions, a summary of any free response portions included, and any significant demographic differences observed.

Major themes found throughout the assessment analysis:

Programming

- Attendees enjoyed the programs that were offered
- They did not know of, did not attend, and/or did not understand Affinity Spaces and SEAHO U
- Affinity Spaces were not widely attended
- Logistically, SEAHO 2025 was a success and people were satisfied with how it was handled

Corporate Partners

- Most people interacted with corporate partners in the Exhibit Hall
- A majority spent between 60-89 minutes in the exhibit hall with corporate partners
- Around 11% of respondents said that corporate partners were a “most beneficial part” of their SEAHO 2025 experience

General Conference

- While a majority were happy with registration some suggested improving group registration processes
- Programming was most beneficial though many respondents suggested changes and opportunities for growth in content and engagement

- Changes to content, speech lengths, the number of speeches, and movement from institutional focused presentation to larger view regional and national focuses were suggested
- Guidebook was well received for information accessing purposes

SEAHO 2026

- A majority of respondents were likely or somewhat likely to engage with SEAHO All Year
- About 88% of respondents said they would attend SEAHO 2026
- Major barriers to attending were institutional support, timing, and whether dietary/physical needs were able to be met by the venue space

Additional data breakdowns, subsets of data, or other inquiries can be sent to the SEAHO Assessment and Research Committee at research@seaho.org.

Hallie Bowen, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at research@seaho.org

Corporate Partners Committee

As we move from spring and into summer, the Corporate Partners Committee continues to travel along. Our Subcommittees are formed, the summer site was toured, and we are gearing up for 2026 and beyond!

Corporate Partners Sub-committees

Our sub-committees are led by an amazing and dedicated group of professionals:

- On-site Tasks and Registration led by Joanne Cheng and Megan Fox focuses on the work at the annual conference with CP check-in and the exhibit hall. This group will work throughout the year to help plan and identify how our CPs will have a great on-site experience and track booth registration and the experience that delegates will have in the exhibit hall.
- Recruitment led by Dr. Scott Rausch and Daniel Chavez Nunez focuses on outreach to CPs concerning the conference, working to identify new Corporate Partners to bring to our conference. If you have any potential partners, then pass them along to corporatepartners@seaho.org
- Publication and Education led by Dan Ryan-Foley and Michael Dobrin develops educational opportunities for members and Corporate Partners including submitting articles for the SEAHO Report and keeping our CPs informed through newsletters.
- Retention, Sponsorships, and Assessment led by Jenna Jeslis and Elisabeth Johnson who work to reach out to our attending Corporate Partners to gain extra support for the annual conference and assess CP needs

Summer Site Visit

There are so many things we cannot wait to share with you when you visit Winston-Salem in 2026. Our conference site offers a great experience not just for Delegates but Corporate Partners as well. With opportunities to network, learn, and if you are an introvert and workaholic like me, find a hideaway to recharge and clear out the inbox. I would share with you the pictures that I took, but I take horrible pictures, and I do not want to place more stress on our lovely *SEAHO Report* editorial team. So, I'll simply direct you to the [website](#) where you can see an amazing virtual tour. The Host Committee is hard at work and planning continues throughout the year.

Other General Updates

- Corporate Partners Focus Group – We are hard at work carrying out the charge of our SEAHO President to identify how we can continue to improve relations and the experience of our Corporate Partners at our annual conference and beyond. Stay tuned for updates throughout the year.
- CP Rolodex – Hey, are you looking for a furniture company for some last minute beds because enrollment management admitted more students than you were initially told. Be sure to refer to our [CP Rolodex](#) for our continuous list of CPs you can reach out to for products and services for your campus.
- Program Collaboration – Don't forget that Corporate Partners are people, and former housing professionals too. A great way to connect and build a relationship is to collaborate with a CP you have worked with in the past and submit a program proposal. Share your experiences with campus planning or implementing and improving a process using technology.

As always, a huge thank you to all our generous Corporate Partners who sponsored RELI 2025, our subcommittee chairs and members of the Corporate Partners Committee.

Kenzel Hill, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at corporatepartners@seaho.org

Marketing & Organizational Promotions Committee

The MOP committee is getting set up for a great fall as we look ahead to further engagement opportunities! We were able to do highlights and takeovers this summer to showcase some really fun regional experiences, such as the summer site visit with the conference team and our RELI takeover for this year's cohort, and we are looking forward to carrying that energy into the next season. We are excited as we look to the fall and the planning of a super fun piece of merch to bring to the annual conference!

Mariah Neibert, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at marketing@seaho.org

Professional Development Committee

Greetings from the Professional Development Committee! [SEAHO YouTube Channel](#)

Since the last edition, we hosted a fireside chat with our new SEAHO President, Dr. Shannon Jordan. May's session was Maximizing your on-boarding experience with myself and Kaitlyn O'Keefe from the University of Georgia. In June, we hosted a session on how to write for this very report presented by Jillian Webber from Appalachian State University! In July, we hosted a session on how to keep your team motivated throughout August! This month, please join us for our Pro Devo Hour on tips & tricks for submitting a winning program proposal for SEAHO with members from the SEAHO Program Committee! All presentations are recorded and are made available on SEAHO's YouTube channel! Check em out!

We will be hosting a tech series focused on software tips & tricks that we use in our daily work and how you can make it work for you! Stay tuned for that schedule soon!

We will also be hosting roundtables and panels for different housing functional areas...more details to come!

Finally, we are seeing a decrease in attendance at our Pro devo hours each month. We are considering changing the date and time for the Fall 2025 season with the hope it works for more people to attend. Please take this poll (https://umiami.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3JHdxEnTJLskA3Y) to let us know if any of the proposed times work better for your schedule.

Happy August!

Liz Ingrao, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at prodevelopment@seaho.org

Program Committee

Calling all housing field experts, leaders, and colleagues with program ideas! Do not miss this opportunity to teach, train, or share your wisdom. Program proposal submissions will be opened to all SEAHO members on Monday, July 21, 2025 and will be due Monday, September 15, 2025.

Are you unsure of what topic you'd like to present or wondering what or how much information you should include in your proposal? The Programming Committee has offered additional resources to help guide and shape your program submissions. These resources can be found on the [SEAHO website](#).

Emily Chavez Nunez, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at programs@seaho.org

SEAHO Report Editorial Board Committee

We are always looking for more articles for upcoming editions! The next SEAHO Report Submission deadline is: Monday, September 29th, 2025. Articles should be Arial, Size 11 font and single spaced!

We always appreciate hearing from our partners across the region and division! Not sure what you want to write, but know what you want to read? Let us know!

Jillian Webber, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at seahoreport@seaho.org

Website Committee

Since our time together in Huntsville, the SEAHO Website Committee has been hard at work enhancing the functionality, organization, and overall operation of the SEAHO website. The committee conducted a comprehensive audit of existing content using a structured rubric to evaluate the relevance, clarity, and usability of the material. Based on these assessments, we identified several opportunities to consolidate overlapping content, transition appropriate sections to member-only access, and remove outdated or redundant information. Additionally, the committee reviewed the site's navigation structure to improve user experience and accessibility. The committee is also working on compiling some recommended changes designed to streamline the menu layout and make resources more accessible and easier to find.

As always, we continue to handle routine website upkeep - archiving outdated files, monitoring website functionality, and responding to contact forms. Recently, we have begun reviewing our user database to identify and address duplicate user accounts, with plans for consolidation moving forward.

Looking ahead, the committee will begin implementing the proposed navigation and content updates in the upcoming quarter. We'll also keep working on digital organization, enhancing site security, and making sure we continue to meet the evolving needs of SEAHO members.

Sarah Butler, Committee Chair

Interested in joining the committee or learning more? Contact us at: webmaster@seaho.org

Still Got the Meme, Now I Run the Team: Zillennial Leadership in Res Life Setting the Scene: Showing Up Young, Present, and Powerful

By Kayon Johnson, George Mason University

Setting the Scene: Showing Up Young, Present, and Powerful

In 2021, I started my journey in Student Affairs as a graduate assistant, ready to conquer the world. I was *that* student leader on campus (the one whose email signature needed a scroll bar). When people asked, “What are you involved in?” My response was always the same: “It’s quicker if I tell you what I’m not involved in.”

Student Affairs had changed my life, and I entered the profession with passion, purpose, and a strong sense of direction. I thought I was ready for any challenge this field could throw at me.

But there was one challenge I hadn’t anticipated: **my age**.

I was fresh out of undergrad, barely a year removed from my RA role, and still laughing at the same TikToks as the students I was now supervising. I had the energy, the empathy, and the experience, but it never once crossed my mind that my age would be a factor into how I led.

That changed quickly. I began to realize the implications of the short age gap the first time I struggled to manage or redirect behavior from students who would’ve been my peers just a year earlier. Suddenly, every dynamic felt more delicate. A casual disagreement could feel personal. Boundaries blurred faster. I had to learn, quickly, how to balance familiarity with authority.

Also, no one really warns you how awkwardly funny it is to see your residents at the same bar you planned your night around. You go from preparing for one-on-ones in the morning to avoiding eye contact over drinks that evening. It’s comical in hindsight, but in the moment, it was a crash course in professional identity. I have had to be very careful about navigating the implications of my age ever since. It forced me to ask hard questions: Should I speak more formally? Dress more conservatively? Distance myself from students to gain authority?

Eventually, I realized my age wasn’t something to hide, and it became one of my greatest assets. My youthfulness wasn’t a flaw to be corrected or an identity to take distance from, but an opportunity to build strong relationships with my students. For many of us “Zillennials”, knowing how to leverage our age as a strategic advantage is exactly what sets us apart.

Zillennials in Higher Education

Zillennials are those born on the cusp between Millennials and Gen Z. We’re the generation that was too young for Oregon Trail in elementary school, but too old for TikTok dances in high school (shoutout to Vine). We grew up in a digital transition era, toggling between Blackberrys and iPhones, passing handwritten notes before switching to DMs. Before anyone showed us Excel, we were already coding MySpace layouts and customizing Tumblr themes.

That dual memory allows us to flex our reach, relating to both analog systems and digital fluency. We can translate for students and staff, and we can maintain tradition while also pursuing innovation.

I've also found that being a Zillennial makes me especially attuned to student needs. I get the urgency behind their expectations. I understand the culture they're bringing into the halls. I can pivot between Slack and spreadsheets, policies and pop culture. In higher ed, especially in housing, that positioning is incredibly valuable.

The Challenges of Leading From the Middle

Leading in the middle (close enough in age to understand students, yet expected to lead with authority) can also bring a unique set of challenges. One of my most memorable moments was having to document a policy violation for a student who, as it turned out, was close friends with my ex. Yes, it was as uncomfortable as it sounds. That moment forced me to confront just how blurred the lines could get between personal and professional when the age gap is razor thin.

It's not just awkward incidents, either. Managing the countless demands of housing, like being on-call, being emotionally present for long hours, and handling aspects of programming, conduct, and crisis, can make it very easy to begin leaning on your students as peers. It's a slippery slope that requires intentional boundaries and constant recalibration.

There's also the internal struggle. Imposter syndrome is real, y'all. You may find yourself "aging up" in tone and dress just to be taken seriously in admin meetings. You may second-guess your language in emails. You quiet your instincts and withhold your opinions in rooms where others have decades on you. You begin to wonder if being yourself is professional enough.

When it comes to thriving in this space between student and senior staff, between culture bearer and policy enforcer, there's one approach that I've found to work for me: accepting that I'm a young and turnt professional.

Redefining Leadership: Living the "Young and Turnt" Mindset

Being a young and turnt professional in this field is not about being trendy or flashy, but about owning our proximity to the student experience as a unique advantage. As Zillennials, our age places us at a meaningful intersection: we're close enough to relate, yet seasoned enough to lead. We're able to see, hear, and respond to our communities in real time because, in many ways, we're still part of them. This unique proximity allows us to lead with empathy, adapt quickly, and build trust more naturally. The phrase itself is a reclamation. To be "turnt" is to be fully alive, engaged, and present; when that energy is paired with intention and skill, it becomes a model for transformational leadership.

This philosophy defines how I lead. Being young and turnt means challenging what's traditional and reimaging it in ways that feel real, accessible, and impactful. At my current institution, that means co-creating unorthodox events with my team that prioritize students' interest over traditional norms. One way I've done that is by sharing my passion for dancing and partnering with student organizations to host line dancing classes. We also send out monthly newsletters (that actually get read) because they sound like something students know. It has also meant being a steady voice of advocacy for students, using every opportunity, from hallway conversations to committee meetings, to uplift their concerns and center their experiences.

The approach also extends beyond administrative and programming work. It shows up in my leadership style, which centers presence over posture. I've had students cut my hair, braid it, weigh in on vacation outfits, and give me brunch spot recommendations. This is not because I'm trying to be their peer, but because the trust that we've built lives in our shared experiences due to age, not in titles or positionality. What makes this framework powerful is the reminder that being human isn't a weakness in leadership, but the foundation of it. That's what being young and turnt really means. And yes, you can do it too.

Encouragement for the Journey Ahead

To the Zillennials and other young professionals in the field, your presence matters. You don't need to dress up your language, mirror tradition, or wait years to validate your leadership. Your age is not something to cover up – it's a powerful tool that needs to be embraced. Lean into your perspective, your proximity, and the cultural lens you already carry.

Always bring your full self in how you talk, how you think, and how you build trust; let that guide your work. If your instincts are grounded in care and community, they're not only valid, but necessary. You're here to push the field forward. Make it happen.

Set boundaries early and protect them. Don't be afraid to advocate for your own wellness while advocating for your students. Let your work reflect your culture, your community, and your clarity. When or if someone ever questions your style or approach, remind yourself: leadership is not one-size-fits-all. You're not here to perform someone else's version of professionalism or Student Affairs. You're here to expand what it can look like for everyone: past, present, and future.

Change the Way You Care for Yourself On-Call

By Rachel Caine, *Wofford College*

When you're in an on-call rotation, serving students in a variety of facets, there is no doubt that what you're doing is critical and necessary. However, I think we often run away from the shame we feel when, some nights, we simply don't feel up to being on-call. The balance between self-care and student care can be difficult, especially when there is no physical distance between work and home life. So how do we combat these feelings of self-care shame and truly take proper care of ourselves on-call?

On-Call Burnout

When it came to on-call during my first year in professional residence life, it felt like the biggest wake-up call (literally) of my life. I found myself dreading my on-call week when it approached on my calendar, and I started counting the days until I knew I'd be passing the phone off. I knew the work I was doing was important, but I felt stuck by the dread I associated with a little black Verizon flip phone.

As I headed into my second year, I started noticing a funny thought re-emerging every time my on-call week was approaching; "At least I will get a lot of laundry done this week." I thought it strange that this small thought brought me something to look forward to, and a little bit of peace. After the hurricane, my team at the time was down one RLC. Which meant an additional week of on-call was going to be added to everyone's schedules. Enough was enough. I needed to stop associating on-call with the fear of a ringtone and start associating it with small pockets of life that I could look forward to, just like my laundry.

Three Mindset Switches for a Self-Care Focused On-Call:

Self-Care looks different for everyone. No matter what you take or don't take from this article, my advice from one on-call employee to another is to prioritize your care the most when you are on-call. I've categorized my favorite forms of self-care into three different types of professionals on-call. My hope is that one of them inspires you to dig deeper into yourself and find new ways to take care of yourself during your on-call weeks.

1.) The "Serial Hobbyist":

The first and easiest mistake to make with being on call is to not live your life while you're holding the phone. We spend so much time saying, "I wish I had time to _____," fill in the blank. On-call can be a great time to allow yourself that time. You might secretly be a really great crafter, baker, photographer, artist, or musician, and you've never really had the chance to experience what it's like to really explore a hobby, just for the sake of fun. The Serial Hobbyist is the professional who uses their time on-call to find something new to try. In my own life I've learned I enjoy felting, painting, cooking pasta, diamond art, and yoga Nidra. The Serial Hobbyist uses their time on-call to learn about themselves. What do you like to do in your free time? There's no pressure to stick to something, instead you get to explore everything. Overall, using your time on-call to try something new will teach you more about yourself, and may even help you find new ways to relax before and after responding to calls.

2.) The "Little Treat Professional":

In a time of "little treat culture," we crave moments of getting to enjoy a break in our busy routines and enjoying a little reward after hard tasks. For on-call, the idea of rewarding ourselves after a difficult week can unknowingly involve us pushing self-care to the side when we need it the most. We've heard it said that we must pour into ourselves to pour into others. So why, when we are giving so much of ourselves to our students, would we save the breaks and those little moments of rewarding ourselves for after the hard work is done? Instead, the Little Treat Professional learns to sprinkle hints of these little moments into their on-call routine. The Little Treat Professional knows that self-care should not only be reactive, but proactive. It should be used to sustain and maintain yourself, in addition to refilling yourself. Why keep running all week until you have nothing left when you can take care of yourself along the way? A "little treat" can be so much more than a coffee or sweet snack. It can be a walk in the sun around campus, making yourself your favorite meal half-way

through the week, or calling that friend you haven't spoken to in months. If you feel the crash at the end of the week, you may want to look at what life-giving things you could add into your on-call routine. Whatever you do, don't deprive yourself of those moments where you can just breathe. You'll already exhale when you pass along the phone, but exhaling throughout the week is where the real work comes in.

3.) The "External Processor":

Checking in on your student staff after an incident can feel like the final step when responding to a call, but who is checking on you? Having a confidential method of letting go after seeing difficult things is essential to long-term care of yourself. Are you giving yourself the space on your own to admit that what you just went through was difficult? We are all responsible for seeking resources to take care of ourselves in the during and after. A traumatic incident has an impact on everyone involved, including you. The External Processor seeks out confidential resources for themselves. They know it's not just helpful, but responsible. They learn where their own body stores stress and explore outlets to release that stress. The External Processor knows that self-care should not only be relieving, but life-giving. This can look like meeting with a therapist, engaging in a workout class, or learning more about sleep hygiene. If you know you need to talk it out, move your body, or learn to properly rest, it can be beneficial to seek out confidential resources or help from within your community. The external processor shows up for themselves, just as much (yes, just as much) as they do for others.

Practice your best self-care on call. It can be the hardest time to do it but it's when you likely need it the most. Remember there is not an ounce of selfishness in self-care and find the fun in getting to explore new pieces of yourself. Here's to you, and all the new ways you are going to learn to show up for yourself on-call!

Rebuilding with Intention: *Residence Life's Roadmap to a Healthier Year*

By **Julia Corrie**, *Rollins College*

Residence Life offices are the backbone of campus life. Similar to Campus Security and Mental Health Support offices, they provide essential services that ensure the safety, well-being, and development of residential students. However, despite their vital role, Residence Life teams often face an uphill battle with the expectation of “doing more with less”. Managing thousands of students across various housing facilities, supporting resident assistants (RAs), mediating conflicts, and responding to crises all require resources, time, and most importantly, human resources. When resources are stretched too thin, the people within these offices bear the brunt of this strain. Subsequently, the consequences trickle down to the students they serve.

With this in mind, the question remains: What can we as residence life professionals do about it? How can we prevent burnout and not be in a “just making it to Friday” working mindset? I have found a few different strategies to be a more intentional leader and team member when the workload feels too much to bear.

Strategic and Thoughtful Planning for Transitions

When vacancies arise in Residence Life offices, the hiring process is not as straightforward as it might be for a traditional 9-to-5 role. Filling a position in our offices involves unique considerations, such as interview coordination, onboarding timelines, and potential relocation logistics. With this in mind, while a job may be posted in January, the reality is that a new professional might not begin until mid-March. Rather than letting this inevitable reality overwhelm us, we can reframe it as an opportunity to plan and build out internal support systems. These transitions don't have to produce a department-wide scramble, but rather can be approached with anticipation and intention.

Departments can set themselves up for success during periods of transition by identifying strategies such as redistributing responsibilities with clarity, creating coverage plans in advance, and keeping communication transparent. I have found that in my short time working in higher education, institutional knowledge is critical to the transition process. Whether it's an entry-level or senior-level transition, the wisdom and institutional knowledge of who is currently in the role does not have to leave with them. While it may seem tedious on the front end, it provides a smooth transition for all professionals who may fill that vacancy in the future.

Transparent communication is also essential, not only when aligning expectations but also when maintaining trust and confidence across the department. When staff are kept in the loop about changes, coverage expectations, and hiring progress, they are better equipped to navigate this temporary uncertainty with purpose. Leadership plays a key role in creating this culture of intentional support, not only through practical efforts of adjusting workloads or offering flex time, but also by recognizing and affirming the extra effort being made. This intentional support can go a long way in boosting morale and ensuring staff feel valued and supported during these challenging periods. As we reflect on this academic year and look ahead, we can be prepared, not just logistically, but emotionally and strategically. Building this strong foundation of

in-office/department culture will not only better support each other as professionals, but also the students we serve.

Proactive Planning

One of the most effective ways to reduce the stress and scramble of our seemingly endless high-demand seasons is to begin planning at least 1-2 full semesters ahead of where we currently are. In Residence Life,

each month brings new challenges and triumphs, programming cycles, staffing, training, and more. Being reactive to these processes as a department can quickly lead to burnout, which we would prefer to avoid if we can help it. Instead, building a system of anticipation rather than reaction can help our teams feel more in control and prepared for what is to come.

Semester-Forward Calendaring

While we know that Residence Life is filled with unpredictability, and even seasoned professionals with decades of experience still encounter new challenges, there is power in planning for what can be anticipated. Semester-forward calendaring is not about creating a rigid checklist everyone must follow at least two semesters ahead, but rather a framework that keeps our eyes on the prize. The “prize” here is those built-in processes that happen cyclically, like recruitment and selection, training, opening, and closing. By mapping these out in advance, there is enough room to thoughtfully consider the anticipated challenges and how to manage the unexpected when it inevitably arises.

Mid-Year Check-Ins

The transition from Fall to Spring can often feel like a sprint with no place to stop.

Although we have winter break, the high stress of fall closing and then right into spring opening can feel overwhelming! This check-in does not have to be a drawn-out “this could have been an email” type of meeting, but rather interwoven into structures already in place, like during staff meetings or 1:1 meetings with supervisors. Assessing energy levels, reflecting on the year thus far, and setting the tone for how we can intentionally support one another as the Spring semester begins can go a long way when it comes to office dynamics.

Assessment-Informed Planning

Working in Residence Life, it is easy to jump from one task to the next without pausing to ask, “Is this working?” Assessment-informed planning can help us move from assuming something is working to being provided with intentional results and a road map for how we can move forward working smarter, not harder. Assessment gives us a clearer picture of student needs, staff capacity, and program effectiveness, which allows us to be more strategic in how we proceed. Simple measures like end-of-semester RA reflections, program attendance tracking, student feedback surveys, and behavioral/conduct trends don’t require a complicated process, but they can serve as powerful jumping off points for an assessment program. When we lean into this kind of reflection, we position ourselves not just as task managers but as holistic educators and leaders who are continually growing and improving our practice.

Conclusion

Residence Life will always come with its fair share of unpredictability and challenges, but that doesn’t mean we have to continue living in a reactionary state rather than an intentional anticipatory one. To shift the narrative from surviving to thriving, we must be committed to proactive planning and grounding our decisions in assessment and reflection. The work we do is critical, and so is how we do it. As we look ahead to a new academic year, we can permit ourselves to slow down when planning ahead and to truly invest in practices that support both the students we serve and each other as professionals in the field. By rebuilding with intention, we can create a department culture rooted not in scarcity and burnout, but in support and purpose.

Efficiency's Accidental Attack on Community: *A Fight for Tomorrow's Friendships and Community*

By Holly Shikano, Georgia Tech

Over the past 30 years, housing and residence life units have been adding more efficient ways to do some of our basic work and, having been present when an RA dropped a drawer of keys on a move-in day, I can say I am thrilled with some of our innovations. Software companies, too, have been honing their products to meet our needs and our reliance on older tech has waned. The COVID-19 pandemic had us all pivoting and finding ways to build community without actually coming together. We hosted online happy hours for pro staff and did community events online as well.

Daily, our Hall Directors work in Maxient, StarRez, Outlook, GroupMe, and Microsoft Teams. We still default to online meetings when traffic or the weather is bad too - but does that serve our team as well? Yes, some meetings could be email updates, but then where are the organic networking opportunities for the newest Hall Directors to get to know the "seasoned" professionals. There aren't water cooler moments when everyone has their own Stanley Cup.

Duty cell phones are so much simpler and more customer-friendly than the old duty pagers or forwarded landlines. Our laundry rooms were once a place people would study and hang out while their clothes were washing and now the machines literally email you when your laundry is ready to switch. I am in my last year in the field but I have a question for the rest of you.

How will you build community without those built-in spaces and in today's climate? There have been times throughout the history of higher education where our field has had to reinvent or adjust or pivot to meet new needs. The 1920s' industrial revolution changed who was coming to college, the 1940s saw the GI Bill, the 1960s saw open enrollment expand and then COVID-19 created even bigger challenges. Now that efficiency is king and technology is everywhere, customer service seems as important or more important than student development. Where do we go from here? The next big community development ideas are needed today!

On my move-in day, back in 1988, I remember meeting my RA, going to the area office, waiting in a decent size line and talking to more RAs and the Hall Director. I got invited to run for a floor representative position and I think I met 6 of the 12 RAs for the building. Now we have "card access" and our students literally are checking themselves in online, the physical check-in location is almost lost to us. What remains is a drive-through where students pick up a parking pass, a map and their campus ID. The line is not conducive to longer conversations about the value of running for a Hall Council position or the opportunity to tell a student "Welcome!" and "I am your RA!" Our move-in surveys say great things about how quick the process was, but there is almost no interpersonal communication happening.

The money savings of not providing cable or phone lines to thousands of bedrooms is welcomed, as students started to stream TV shows and movies and cell phones are ubiquitous. But what have these 'efficiencies' cost our communities? When I studied abroad in 1992, there was one phone on our floor. My favorite year I was on Hall Council, we held our meeting in the big TV lounge and we always tabled any remaining items when *Star Trek: the Next Generation* was starting up. Officers brought drinks and we watched the show together, providing social time to ease any ruffled feathers over votes that didn't go your way. I know our students may not want to stream the same shows, but I imagine that on game days, our students are individually streaming the away games and watching them on their laptops or phones, alone.

Room access is driven by student ID cards or electronic keys. Our students can check themselves in, do their maintenance requests online and then check themselves out all without one single human interaction. While during COVID-19 and any pandemic that is great, but what has this drive to efficiency cost us and how do we build community without those built in spaces?

Dining is also moving to that arena. Students can see what is being served all over campus by scrolling through the dining website and do so alone. In earlier times, RAs used to post menus to bulletin boards where we posted the menus for the week which were a gathering point, thus allowing/encouraging people to meet

up and walk over together to dinner are no more. Whether your dining is in-house, Sodexo or Aramark, I bet students access the menus online. Our dining hall just put in an entire set of tables designed to help our students eat alone. As our campus expands our first-year class, they need to accommodate more people and the seats face a half wall and so take up less floor space. So our students now eat alone and scroll, and eat and scroll.

I am a huge fan of efficiency when it improves service, like our duty phones, but I am challenged to think of how we can make up for the loss of the personal interactions from other ‘improvements’. How can we still build community in places that no longer seem to be ‘holding’ the students? They have no need to come to our offices, our laundry rooms email them when they are ready, and our one-on-one tutoring has moved online as well.

I have a poster on my door that has a list of 20 things you can do to build community. It starts with “turn off your TV”, “go outside”, and “know your neighbors”. On my campus, I think the top three would be “put down your phone” and “talk to your roommate” or “eat with your floor”. But what other items can we add to this list? Join a club, attend an event, come to Hall Council all sound great, but how do we get them out?

Hall Directors can now email their entire buildings through either Roomcompact, StarRez, eResLife, or another software. Surveys through Survey Monkey or constant contact also enable us to cast a wider net quickly. No need to export a CSV and save as an Excel Document to cut and paste into a BCC section of an old fashioned email. Using Mentimeter in a presentation or similar software you can get real time, anonymous information but how actionable is it? How many Hall Directors have time to simply walk through their buildings and greet residents or ask how their day went?

I want to challenge the Directors and the Hall Directors of today to think about how we can build space or time for more organic interactions. Late night card games and discussions about the meaning of life or how you grew up versus me helped create me. What opportunities are we creating for today’s students? How can we engage them on their own terms and still facilitate community?

Building friendships requires people, a location, and a shared experience according to Mel Robbins (of the Let Them Theory podcast). Efficiency has robbed us of some of those experiences. What can you do, build, create to give the class of 2029 an opportunity to build friendships with their peers before the “great scattering” when they graduate and move all over the country if not the world.

We know technology is going to continue to change, and ideally, enhance our day to day but, unless this group of housing officers is strategic and thoughtful in creating new paths for interactions, our students will be empowered to opt-out of the life-long friendships, incidental experiences that help them develop and grow. What are the best practices for the classes of 2030, 2035, 2045?

I wish I had answers for you but I suspect that there are some amazing stories of campus staff building community today. Please share your strategies at conferences and when leaders are making decisions about the latest and greatest technological advance, consider what impact it could have on the community as you decide to go “all in” on another way to reduce interpersonal interactions.

Experiences of Black SHOs at Southern PWIs

By **Christian M. Robinson**, *University of South Carolina*

Introduction

This article will highlight the major findings and implications from my dissertation research where I explored the experiences of Black Senior Housing Officers (SHOs) from Southern PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions). This research study utilized a narrative inquiry design to explore the experiences of 9 Black SHOs across the Southern United States.

Findings

There were four main themes that emerged from my study:

Racism in the South

All participants noted the racialized experiences and racism they encountered while working as Black SHOs at Southern PWIs. This theme elicited tense physical reactions from participants as they recounted their experiences and those of their staff and students. Participants felt comfortable using profanity to describe the racism faced on campus. They emphasized the importance of diversity in staff and student populations, a recurring theme throughout each interview. Participants highlighted the need for diverse leadership in housing and residence life, that reflects the student body's demographics. Discussions also covered the campus racial climate and interactions among racial groups in housing and the broader institution. When asked what it is like living and working at a Southern PWI, one participant noted, "So it's the South, but like, I grew up in the South, so like, if, if there's racism, then I'm used to that". This quotation effectively encapsulates the findings of the study, as all participants were raised in the Southern United States. Consequently, they are familiar and expect to deal with the pervasive racism that has persisted for many years in this region. It was also evident in interviews how the emergence of anti-DEI laws across the Southeastern United States affected participants' day-to-day professional and personal lives. Participants focused on the need for cultural competency and equity in decision-making processes in housing departments; and discussed the challenges of navigating institutional policies while striving to meet the diverse needs of students. A significant theme was the influence of external factors such as the political climate and being an auxiliary that funds institutional priorities.

Experiencing and Combatting Onlyness

Participants shared similar feelings about the sense of onlyness, defined by Harper (2013) as the "psycho-emotional burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same racial or ethnic group" (p. 189). Participants expressed feeling both physically and emotionally isolated in their workplaces, often being the only Black senior leader in meetings. They also felt the pressure of having to explain to white supervisors and peers the racial tension that currently exists in the world. Each participant stressed the importance of building a local and regional professional network to help alleviate feelings of isolation. They acknowledged the positive impact of professional organizations, such as SEAHO, on their

careers by providing a supportive network for Black SHOs. Participants connected the experience of feeling alone to the necessity of developing a supportive network.

Housing Chose Us

All participants shared that their housing and residence life careers were not planned but evolved due to unexpected life events or opportunities. As participants described their pathway to becoming an SHO, it became clear in a majority of interviews that the housing career chooses individuals instead of individuals choosing housing. Participants enjoyed their first positions in housing - achieving work success, and developing a passion for building community and supporting the residential experience on campus. Their initial successes led their drive to move through the hall director, assistant director, and associate director levels before ultimately becoming an SHO.

Support and Mentorship

Participants noted the significance of support systems, mentorship, and community building. They shared experiences of how mentorship and supportive supervisors positively impacted their professional journeys. Participants highlighted the importance of building a network of mentors who understand the lived experience of being Black in housing. Participants also emphasized the need for white allies to speak up and support minority colleagues, especially during political and social unrest. One participant noted that there needs to be more representation at the SHO level, especially in today's political climate where the term "DEI hire" serves to discredit Black people in positions of power. The term *board of directors* emerged from the stories to denote a collective of professional and personal mentors who assist in guiding decision-making and actions in routine scenarios for Black SHOs.

Implications

As seen across the Southeast, attacks on DEI policies and practices continue across the country. Despite the bans, Black SHOs in this study mentioned several efforts to rebrand DEI initiatives to comply with new regulations while still providing safe spaces for students and staff of color. The Black SHOs in this study implored other Black SHOs and leaders to continue to commit to the principles of DEI despite the bans. One participant recommended changing the words to comply with the bans but continuing to focus on the goals of DEI. I also recommend that housing leaders consult with institutional legal teams to ensure future programs and initiatives follow individual state laws.

White supervisors and institutions need to know there is a sense of fear and uncertainty that exists for Black housing staff, including Black SHOs. These political bans are creating further racial tensions and a sense of Black students and staff not being welcomed on Southern college campuses. This fact has led several Black SHOs in this study to be flat-out angry at the current reality, which could lead to feelings of resentment among Black SHOs. However, Black SHOs in this study mentioned the need for housing departments to adopt strategies to continue supporting Black students and staff. One participant even suggested focusing on global competency as an alternative framework. Participants were not sure of the long-term effects these political bans will have on Black students and staff, which should be a future research goal for scholars to focus on in coming years. Despite all of the challenges, Black SHOs expressed their determination to continue working towards inclusive environments for all. Anon stated it best that we have been doing DEI work before somebody labeled it that way. We will still do the work; it will look slightly different.

Throughout the findings, participants highlighted the importance of seeking support and mentorship outside of their home campus. Organizations such as SEAHO were directly named as safe places for Black housing professionals and a place for Black housing professionals to build their board of directors. I recommend that SEAHO and similar organizations continue providing safe spaces for Black housing staff to convene and provide mutual support while fostering robust support networks. Black SHOs may face limitations in establishing comparable spaces on their campuses due to the pervasive impact of anti-DEI policies prevalent in the majority of the Southeastern region of the United States. As a regional organization operating beyond state politics, SEAHO can effectively offer affinity spaces that individual institutions may be unable to provide.

Conclusion

My dissertation explored the experiences of Black SHOs at PWIs in the United States. This research highlights the concept of onlyness, where Black professionals feel isolated and burdened with representing their entire race. Additionally, participants discuss the pervasive racism they encounter, the impact of DEI bans on campus, and the importance of cultural competence in decision-making processes.

A study of Black SHOs in the South highlights the value of their work and the importance of representation for Black students and staff. This study recommends embracing authenticity, building a supportive “board of directors” for mentorship, and continuing to prioritize DEI inclusion despite political bans.

Citations

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Still Showing Up: Navigating Training While Neurodivergent

By Dr. Tyeesha “Tye” Wesley, *University of North Carolina at Greensboro* &
Sharese Stribling, *University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

July and August are two of the most exciting months on a college campus. There’s a buzz in the air as new student leaders arrive with wide eyes and anxious excitement. Returning RAs reunite like long-lost besties, and training spaces fill with the energy of icebreakers, group spirit chants, and color-coded schedules. We stand at the front of the room, guiding our teams through the sessions that we helped design; evaluating, adjusting, and making sure everything lands just right.

On the surface, we look like we’ve got it all together. But inside, we are just trying to survive.

As autistic women, these moments; filled with noise, movement, and emotional intensity can be overwhelming. The screams during roll call, the clapping games, the constant interactions, the expectation to hold eye contact and always be “on” are all a storm inside our bodies. We want to participate. We love what we do. We love building training from the ground up, watching people grow, and creating experiences that support students and staff as they navigate the new year. But while we are pouring into others, we are also quietly trying not to have a panic attack. We are overstimulated and exhausted yet fully committed.

And as Black women at a Minority Serving Institution, we know our presence holds meaning. People see us as a symbol of possibility. Students look to us for guidance, connection, and representation. We feel the eyes, the expectations, the weight of being someone’s “goal.” And still, we are dying inside, smiling through the sensory overload, leading through the fog.

Are you nodding your head, either because you’ve experienced it yourself, or have coworkers who have expressed something similar? Perfect! Well, maybe not perfect, because this feeling is actually the worst. But hey, you are not alone! Below are 5 tips and words of advice we encourage you to employ yourself and with members of your team who might be juggling life and the job while being neurodivergent.

1. **Please don’t assume when we walk away for a breather or when we get quiet that we don’t want to be there—we do!** We picked this career path for a reason: we love our students, our student leaders, and our jobs, but sometimes it’s the things we love most that can exhaust us the most. In the moments when the room is the loudest, when there’s the most excitement and movement, that’s when it’s crucial for us to take a step away. Tye advocates for this starting with your professional staff training. Although she is a part of the senior leadership team, she is often announcing when she is getting overwhelmed and will step outside with her headphones and will take a quick R&B break to tackle the rest of the day. Tye also encourages people to do this as needed. Fringe participation is still participation.
2. **Create judgement-free work environments**—let people knit, play with fidgets, color, or whatever they might need to stay alert. Stop giving folks the side-eye and automatically assuming they’re not listening! Simply sitting and listening is not always the best way for people to learn—sometimes doing something with our hands, quietly tapping along to a beat, or standing up in the back of the presentation room is just what someone needs to get through another session. The most important part of creating this environment is knowing your team or setting the groundwork to know them. Most of us humans have a tell, whether it is panic eyes, super fidgeting, tapping, shaking, or irregular breathing. If you are seeing that, check in. Even if they are just absentmindedly doing something, saying something rather than not is the best way to go. If they are having a moment, it might be asking them to take care of that “we are 10 copies short” print job or for them to count lunch tickets in the lobby to give them a moment to breathe and still be adding to the team.
3. **Plan, plan, plan!** Where it’s available, give your team the training schedule as soon as possible, and let them be flexible where they see room. Give your professional staff the autonomy to lead how they see fit—that’s what you hired them for, right?
 1. As a leadership team member, what have you done to create a space that allows your team to know they are content experts? What we mean by this is have you given your team the structure

of what training should look like, but allowed them to make the small adjustments as needed? Do they know you trust them to make those decisions? We believe that the live-in team are the content experts of their team and their community. For example, if they and their team are running off fumes, does it matter if they make the call that in-hall is combined one night, so that the next day is free? Was the information covered, did everyone understand, does it impact the overall experience? Did it get done and was it done *well*?

2. As a live-in staff member, think about those long days. Look in advance to see where the day's topics might be heavier; think, which days are you most likely to be exhausted and which days your team will likely be their most exhausted... and **PLAN AHEAD!** It's okay to end the night early with your staff if your cup's running on E. It's okay to let your staff have a quieter dinner together and then let them head back to their room for an early night and some rest. One thing we've learned is that you won't regret the moments you allowed for rest, you'll only regret those when you didn't. The work will always be there, we promise!

4. Encourage personal accommodations! Training is the time to build rapport, to nourish the interactions and relationships with the teams we hope to keep until the end of the year. One way we love to do that in Higher Education is through lunch socials; we love a kiki over some pizza or sandwiches! But unfortunately, the hardest part of the day for neurodivergent and autistic people is the lunch hour when the food is provided for us, not prepared in front of us, and without a menu given to be reviewed in advance. And nothing, *nothing*, makes overstimulation, exhaustion, and irritability worse than an empty belly. One of the best things Sharese did for herself this past RA training was pack her own lunch. The stress this eliminated for her each day, knowing if all else failed, she had her safety foods with her, was unparalleled. If someone is able to and wants or needs to address minor changes like this in the schedule, that don't harm anyone else, why wouldn't you encourage it? If they're still with the group, building relationships and getting to know your newest batch of student leaders, why not celebrate it?

5. Provide professional accommodations! One way our department was intentional about crafting psychological safety was asking both presenters and listeners what accommodations they might need to be successful, and we simply address the ask without announcing it to the entire space. It's no one's business what accommodation(s) someone might need!

1. For Sharese, presenting was and still is one of her biggest fears. To get through these experiences, she's learned a few things that help: First, say the thing! Address the elephant in the room! Get up in front of that crowd and say, "Listen, friends, presenting is really hard for me. I might stutter, my legs might shake, I've got my fidget toy and my emotional support diet Coke... please be kind." Say the thing! By addressing the thing you fear, you don't have to present with the worries of, "Oh, I wonder if they can tell I'm nervous; Oh, I hope I'm not shaking too bad; Oh, I hope they don't think I'm weird because I haven't put down my fidget toy." You've said the thing, the audience knows the thing, and now you can do that really hard thing—presenting and showing up!

A Call to Action

To our fellow higher ed warriors, training gurus, and lovers of color-coded chaos, let's do better by each other and ourselves. Let's build spaces where folks don't have to choose between being excellent and being okay. Because listen... we can lead a flawless icebreaker and still need to cry in the corner of the dining hall afterward. Both can be true.

Let's normalize stepping out when the roll call screams get too loud. Let's stop the looks when someone brings their own lunch, because some of us just want our safe food and a moment of peace without mystery food or another round of pizza involved. And please, if someone's hiding with a fidget toy and a Diet Coke, they're not being weird, they're managing.

If you're designing training, consider this your permission slip to shake things up. Let presenters sit down. Let the staff tap out for five minutes. Let people bring headphones, comfort snacks, or just their whole unfiltered selves. It costs you nothing and gives someone everything.

This work is hard enough. Let's lead with empathy, make room for differences, and remind ourselves that being the "goal" doesn't mean we can't also be the one who dips out during lunch socials to regroup.

Your presence is powerful, your boundaries are valid, and your survival is not up for negotiation.

So, breathe. Stretch. Snack. Lead. Hide. Repeat

No Office, No Problem: *How Housing Steps Up for Transfer Students at NC State*

By **Hallie Bowen**, NC State & **Patrick Stephenson**, NC State

At NC State, the absence of a centralized office dedicated to transfer student support means that these students must navigate the institution through a decentralized web of resources. Unlike traditional first-year students, who often benefit from structured onboarding and targeted programming, transfer students are left to piece together academic guidance, campus involvement opportunities, and social connections on their own. This fragmented approach can hinder a student's sense of belonging and limit access to timely information, peer networks, and holistic support.

The consequences of this decentralized model are significant. Transfer students frequently report feelings of isolation, uncertainty about university policies and resources, and challenges in integrating into existing student communities. These issues can compound the already complex experience of transitioning from one institution to another, particularly for those who are older, commuting, or balancing work and family obligations.

In this landscape, University Housing emerges as a critical partner in bridging the support gap. Through intentional programming, community-building efforts, and day-to-day engagement, campus housing can create an inclusive, supportive environment for transfer students. More than just a place to live, residence life can become a central hub for connection, guidance, and identity development—meeting transfer students where they are and helping them thrive.

The Role of Housing in Transfer Student Support

Transfer students arrive on campus with a unique set of needs that often go unrecognized in traditional student support models. While they may have prior college experience, transferring to a new institution presents a fresh set of challenges: adapting to a different academic culture, building new peer networks, and navigating institutional systems without the structured guidance that first-year students typically receive. Many transfer students are also older, more independent, and juggling additional responsibilities such as work, commuting, or family obligations. These factors make the transition process more complex and require intentional, tailored support.

Unfortunately, traditional housing models are not always designed with transfer students in mind. First-year residence halls often prioritize social integration through high-energy programming and shared developmental milestones. Upperclass housing, meanwhile, tends to be more independent and less structured, which can leave transfer students without the relational or institutional support they need. The in-between space that transfers occupy, neither new to college nor fully integrated into the university, can result in their exclusion from both programming and community.

Housing and Residential Life has the potential to fill these gaps by intentionally reimagining support structures for transfers. Intentional roommate matching, for example, can connect transfer students with peers who share similar goals, majors, or life stages. Training Resident Advisors (RAs) on the specific challenges transfer students face, such as navigating credit evaluations, understanding different academic expectations, or finding community, can make hall staff more effective and empathetic. Programming designed with transfer experiences in mind, career readiness workshops, faculty meet-and-greets, wellness events, or casual social mixers, can help build community and foster a sense of belonging.

At NC State and similar institutions, there are opportunities to expand these efforts. Some transfer students are placed into general upperclass housing without any transfer-specific support, making it easy to slip through the cracks. Even when housing does offer inclusive programming, it's often not explicitly marketed to or designed

for transfer students. Without intentional outreach and design, well-meaning efforts may not reach the students who need them most.

Moreover, the pace of adjustment for transfers can be fast and unforgiving. Unlike first-years, who often have full orientation schedules and structured welcome weeks, transfer students may arrive just days before classes start with limited onboarding. Residence life can play a crucial role here, providing early welcome programming, community-building events during the first weeks of the semester, and proactive check-ins from staff trained to support transfer transitions.

By recognizing the unique position of transfer students and the limitations of traditional housing models, institutions can begin to reshape residential life as a space for transfer belonging and success. When housing professionals take a more intentional, equity-minded approach to transfer inclusion, they help create a campus culture where every student, regardless of entry point, has the tools and relationships needed to thrive.

Living and Learning Community Interventions: The Transfer Connections Village

At NC State, the Transfer Connections Village (TCV) stands as a model of how campus housing can be reimaged to meet the distinct needs of transfer students. As a living-learning community designed specifically for transfers, TCV creates a supportive residential environment where students can build community, access targeted programming, and engage in experiences that ease their transition and enhance their success.

TCV is grounded in the understanding that transfer students often struggle to find community, access career guidance, and connect with academic support in the same way traditional first-years do. To address this, the Village offers a holistic approach to student success. Community events like game nights, study sessions, and off-campus excursions foster belonging and help students form meaningful relationships with peers. Career-focused initiatives, such as resume-building workshops, mock interviews, and job search strategy sessions, help students prepare for life after graduation.

Academic support is provided through partnerships with campus offices and staff, while peer mentors and Resident Advisors trained in transfer student issues offer personalized guidance. These offerings are not just theoretical, they produce real impact. Students who live in TCV consistently report feeling more connected to the university and better supported during their transition. They benefit from having a built-in network of peers who understand their experience, staff who advocate for their success, and programming that speaks directly to their needs and goals.

One student put it this way:

“Living in TCV made me feel like I wasn’t just dropped into a huge school to figure it out alone. I had people who got it, who were also navigating something new, and that made all the difference.”

This sense of belonging is especially critical for transfer students who may otherwise feel like outsiders. While general campus life can be overwhelming or inaccessible, TCV provides an entry point, an anchor for engagement and growth.

Additionally, TCV offers intentional programming through initiatives like the Transfer Seminar Series, which connects students with campus resources and supports them in building academic, career, leadership, and wellness confidence. Programs like *“Connections on the Go”* bring outreach directly to students through informal tabling, snacks, and check-ins in common spaces, while ProStaff and Mentor Hours offer

one-on-one access to peers and professionals who can answer questions or provide support.

Compared to transfer students who live in standard upperclass housing or off-campus, TCV participants tend to be more involved, better informed, and more likely to persist. While quantitative data collection is ongoing, initial reflections and qualitative feedback suggest the Village plays a key role in helping students feel seen, supported, and successful.

In a university without a centralized transfer office, the Transfer Connections Village serves as a powerful model for intervention. It shows that when transfer students are intentionally brought into a community that understands and supports them, their potential flourishes. TCV not only fills a gap, it sets a standard for how residential life can actively contribute to transfer student success.

Action Steps

Do you see a need on your campus for transfer students and transfer student housing? Consider these questions when taking the steps to determine how to navigate the transfer student residential process.

1. What specific challenges do transfer students face when adjusting to academic and social life on your campus, and how can housing programs address these needs?
2. In what ways can residential advisors (RAs) and other housing staff be trained to better support transfer students in navigating both academic and social challenges? Does this change from Inside and Outside a Living and Learning Village?
3. How would transfer students who participate in Living and Learning Village compare to those living in traditional upperclass housing or off-campus housing in terms of academic and social outcomes?
4. What types of programming and community-building activities in residential life are most effective at promoting a sense of belonging for transfer students?
5. How do transfer students on your campus perceive the role of campus housing in their transition experience, and what further improvements can be made? Do you have a large number of transfer students asking for housing?
6. How can campus housing professionals design policies and practices that are more inclusive of transfer students' diverse needs, including those who are older, commuting, or have family obligations?
7. What are the long-term effects of participating in transfer-specific living-learning communities like TCV on transfer students' academic persistence and career outcomes?
8. How does the absence of a centralized transfer student office on your campus impact transfer students' sense of belonging and integration into campus life? If a centralized office exists, how effective is your partnership with them?

Conclusion

In the absence of a centralized transfer student office at NC State, housing and residential life have emerged as a key site for supporting transfer student success. The unique challenges transfers face—social isolation, academic adjustment, and limited access to community, cannot be addressed by one-size-fits-all models. But as the Transfer Connections Village shows, intentional design within campus housing can offer a powerful solution.

By creating spaces where transfer students feel seen, supported, and connected, residential life can serve as more than just a place to live, it becomes a platform for belonging, growth, and long-term success. TCV's model demonstrates what's possible when transfer needs are centered: proactive programming, trained staff, peer support, and opportunities for career and academic development, all housed within a residential community built just for them.

As institutions nationwide grapple with how best to serve a growing and increasingly diverse population of transfer students, TCV offers a compelling example. Could more campuses adopt a similar model? What would it look like for housing professionals to lead the way in supporting transfers more intentionally? These questions are worth exploring, because when transfer students are supported, the whole institution becomes stronger.

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Alabama

The theme for the ALAHO State Meeting on October, 8, 2025 hosted by Auburn University will be, "From the Plains: Building Foundations for Student Success".

Florida

Updated FHO Executive Board:

- State Representative (flstaterrep@seaho.org) - Karly Taylor - University of Tampa
- Treasurer (fhotreasurer@gmail.com) - Justen Smith - Florida A&M University
- Student Leadership Coordinator (fholeap@gmail.com) - Miguel Sosa - University of North Florida
- Sage (fhosage@gmail.com) - Catherine Kellman-Pitan - Florida Atlantic University

FHO Fall Annual Business Meeting Registration is LIVE via the FHO Website: <https://www.floridahousingofficers.org/event-details/fho-annual-fall-meeting-2025>. If you're planning to hang out with us in November, buy your tickets now! Registration requires individual information, so please provide the appropriate contact information for yourself or your institution if purchasing for multiple people at once. FHO Fall Annual Business Meeting will be November 12th - 14th, 2025 at the DoubleTree by Hilton at 5780 Major Blvd, Orlando, FL 32819. Room rate is \$139/night, which can be accessed at the booking block here: <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/mcountd-ho2-1e1c0527-64cb-484a-9d8e-ba339933b54d/>.

Speaking of websites, FHO has a brand new one! Check us out at [floridahousingofficers.org](https://www.floridahousingofficers.org)!

Florida Gulf Coast University is hosting FHO's annual student leadership conference, LEAP, October 10th - 12th, 2025. Registration for delegations and advisors is currently open and available for \$130/person. Registration for LEAP and more information about the event can be found here: <https://www.floridahousingofficers.org/event-details/leap-2025-coastal-cowboys-riding-the-wave-to-leadership>.

FHO Committees have taken off! FHO offers three opportunities to get involved: FHO Corporate Sponsors Committee, FHO Connect Committee, and FHO Conference Support Committee. If you are interested in getting involved, please feel free to email us!

Follow us on IG: @fhoconnect

Georgia

GHO 2025 will be hosted at Georgia State University October 23-24, 2025.

Kentucky

KAHO will be hosted at Western Kentucky University on October 3, 2025. Check out our website updates here: <https://kentuckyhousingofficers.org/>.

Louisiana

LAHO closed Executive Board applications on June 20th, 2025. We look forward to welcoming our newest board later this summer. Join LAHO at LACUSPA's 50th Annual Conference hosted in Hammond, LA at Southeastern Louisiana University. See lacuspa.com/conference-1.html for more details.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Association of Housing Officers (MAHO) continues to make progress in strengthening collaboration and engagement among institutions across the state. We are excited to share that several new colleges and universities have expressed interest in becoming more actively involved with both MAHO and SEAHO, further broadening our professional community.

Additionally, monthly touchpoints among MAHO representatives have continued to support shared learning, collaborative problem-solving, and momentum around statewide housing priorities.

Annual Conference Updates

We are pleased to announce that the **Annual MAHO Conference** will be held **November 4–6, 2025**, hosted by **Itawamba Community College (ICC)** in **Tupelo, MS**.

Conference highlights will include:

- Targeted educational sessions for entry-level, mid-level, and senior housing professionals
- Networking receptions and State roundtable discussions
- Recognition of outstanding professionals and initiatives within the state
More information, including the Call for Programs and registration details, will be available soon.

Professional Development Events

In addition to the annual conference, MAHO is hosting a **Professional Development Opportunity in August 2025** to kick off the Fall semester. This event will feature:

- Virtual and/or in-person sessions on supervising student staff, best practices, and community development
- Networking spaces for new professionals and graduate students
Final details including date, platform/location, and registration will be released in July.

We are excited to continue offering accessible and timely learning experiences for housing professionals across Mississippi.

Contact and Social Media

To stay connected with MAHO and receive timely updates:

- Website: mahoconnect.com
- Instagram: [mahoconnect](https://www.instagram.com/mahoconnect)
- Facebook: Mississippi Association of Housing Officers-MAHO
- Email: maho.gc@gmail.com

We welcome all housing professionals across the state and encourage participation in our events and leadership opportunities as we grow our impact together.

North Carolina

We are excited to have everyone join us this Fall at NC A&T on Oct 29-31 for NCHO 2025

South Carolina

South Carolina will be hosting our annual SCHOA conference at USC-Beaufort's Hilton Head campus on Friday, October 17th. 2025.

Registration:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTSpdMcfIMu_i1pF_8zz4wzPXOgpGPYdFF46LqIJcHISorQA/viewform

Program proposals:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdGQJv27GLjzFxsVOtKH8AAypO0rLSp3t10hbZSM7gxC4GIWQ/viewform>

We will have numerous positions up for election this Fall and hope to see some new representation from around the state:

- President Elect (3-year term)
- State Representative (2-year term)
- Marketing/Technology Chair (1-year term)
- Senior Housing Officer Representative (1-year term)
- Professional Development Chair (1-year term)
- Graduate Student Representative (1-year term)

Committee Interest Form

Our committee chairs are doing amazing work, but we want your help! Our committees include Marketing and Technology, Awards, Outreach and Engagement, and Professional Development. If you are interested in serving on one of our committees, please submit your interest here.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfX9P33htJm61veRrs9IXkKiCZ-mXMEsNBqLw8f_76DxtoBNA/viewform

SCHOA All-Year

For the second year, we are excited to share that we will be opening up nominations for state-level awards. We thoroughly enjoyed reading nominations last year and it felt great to help be a part of recognizing all of the amazing, talented practitioners and the knowledge they have to offer and the impact they make on their respective institutions.

The nomination form is officially open. **You can submit nominations [here](#). We will be accepting nominations for the awards listed below until September 22nd, 2025 at 5:00pm.** In order to ensure we are able to order and receive award plaques, this will be a firm submission deadline for all nominations. As we continue to build out our new SCHOA Email listserv, please forward along to your colleagues and spread the word out about this recognition opportunity!

After reading the descriptions below, if you know someone who you feel should be nominated, please submit a nomination! Your kind words of affirmation and your efforts toward recognition may mean the world to the individual you are nominating!

Award Descriptions

- 1. Outstanding Undergraduate Student** (serves in an official housing role in SC, ex: RHA, RA, DA, etc.): This award recognizes an undergraduate student who serves in a leadership role within their University's Housing department that has excelled in academics, leadership, and community involvement. They have had/are having a significant impact on their campus or beyond within their responsibilities as a housing paraprofessional.
- 2. Outstanding Graduate Student** (enrolled in a graduate program of any discipline and serving in a Housing role in SC): This award honors a graduate student who is making a significant impact in the field of student housing in South Carolina. Their commitment to academics, combined with their contributions in a housing role, demonstrates exceptional leadership and dedication to the student experience.
- 3. Outstanding Entry-Level Professional** (<3 years of professional experience): This award celebrates a rising star in the professional field with up to three years of experience. The early achievements, initiative, and dedication showcase remarkable promise for a successful and impactful career.
- 4. Outstanding Mid-Level Professional** (3-7 years of professional experience): This award recognizes a mid-level professional with 3-7 years of experience who has consistently demonstrated excellence in their role through a variety of avenues such as departmental initiatives, student engagement and/or service to the field as a whole. Their expertise, leadership, and contributions have significantly advanced their organization or area of practice. Nominees for this award exhibit a profound understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in university housing management. They possess a strong track record of fostering inclusive and supportive living environments that promote student success, well-being, and community engagement.
- 5. Outstanding Senior Housing Officer** (serves as SHO for SC college/university with a residential campus): This award honors a Senior Housing Officer (SHO) who has made exceptional contributions to the housing experience at a South Carolina college or university. Their leadership and innovation have ensured a positive and vibrant living environment for students. SHO = someone with "Director" in their title or responsibilities
- 6. 1981 Founders Award** (presented to past or present SCHOA Executive Board members for exemplary service to the organization): This prestigious award recognizes an Executive Board member whose exemplary service has significantly impacted the organization since its founding in 1981. Their dedication, leadership, and contributions have been instrumental in the ongoing success and mission of the organization.

Tennessee

TACUHO 2025 will be hosted at UT-Chattanooga on October 13-14, 2025. More information can be found on our website: <https://www.tacuho.org/tacuho2024>

Virginia

Save the Date for the annual Virginia Student Services Conference (VSSC) at Wintergreen Resort November 5-7, 2025!