

Programming Packet

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Programming Resources:

Programming doesn’t need to be a burden. You have TONS of resources at your fingertips!

- Your staff can be your best resource! Don’t ever hesitate to talk to your supervisor, and don’t forget to utilize each other. Co-programming is fun and effective!!! Also, chat with other RAs in other buildings to see what they are doing!
- Use resident surveys!
- Utilize YOUR RA MANUAL and your Supervisor!! There’s great stuff in there!
- ResidentAssistant.com <http://www.residentassistant.com>
- RAsource! http://www.wiu.edu/users/mirac/main_page.htm
- Reslife.net <http://www.reslife.net>
- PaperClip Communications: <http://www.paper-clip.com>
- The articles in this packet

The ABC's of Programming – It's as easy as "P.I.E."

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Programming, or planning events and activities for residents, is a very important part of the RA position. Programming assists in building community on your floor, educating residents about important issues, and helping them be more socially, academically, and personally successful.

Since programming is so important, this article focuses on the basics of successful programs. Whether you are a 3rd year RA, or this is your first semester, take a moment to get "back to the basics" in your programming.

The three primary components of programming can be remembered by following statement: "**It's as easy as P.I.E.**" P.I.E. stands for Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation.

Preparation

Preparation is the most important part of programming P.I.E. Preparation consists of many elements which combine to produce great programs. Some of them are outlined here:

Assessment – In order to put on effective programs, it is important to know what your residents need and want. This can be done through formal and informal evaluation. Formal evaluation can be done using a survey and by asking for verbal feedback. For an example of a written survey, click here. Informal assessment comes through your

Relationships. Having relationships with your residents is a key component to programming. If you have a strong connection with those you want to program for, they will want to do things together. You will know more about their **needs** and **interests**, as well as when the best time is to have a program.

Planning – While some great "impromptu" programs happen at the last minute, the most effective programming requires that you plan a date in advance. This will allow you to get all of the details you need in place, including your location, any materials, guests, etc. Use your supervisor to help you in this process!

Advertising – Effective advertising should come in many forms. It is helpful to come up with a creative title for your program that will help you with advertising.

An example of an effective advertising strategy follows: 2 weeks before the program, post **simple flyers** all over the hall in order to generate curiosity. With 1 week left, place **door hangers** on everyone's door with more details. With 3 days left, put more **detailed flyers** up. On the day of the program, email

everyone on your floor and put up big posters announcing the program. During this entire time, utilize “word of mouth” advertising. “Talk it up” to you residents! If you don’t ask them to come, they might not take the initiative. This is where the relationships are so important.

Implementation – Now that you have finished the **P**reparation process, you are ready for your program!

Here are some keys to remember as you execute a successful program:

- The day before the program, confirm all details, including speakers, room reservations, or other important components of your program.
- Show up early: Depending on the program, make sure you are there early enough to set up, meet any guest speakers, or do any other preparation.
- Enjoy your program! You put a lot of work into it, now enjoy it!
- Be sure to thank everyone who was involved in making the program a success!

Evaluation – The **P**lanning is over, and the program has been **I**mplemented, so now all that is left is **E**valuation. Evaluating how a program went will not only help you in the future, it will also help others who want to do the same program or a similar program. Evaluation can happen on several levels:

- Formal resident evaluations – Hand out evaluation sheets to the residents who attended the program.
- Informal evaluation – Ask participants what they thought of the program. Watch their responses and interactions.
- Self-evaluation – Fill out an evaluation of how you think the program went. Include your thoughts on the planning, advertising, content, location, etc.

Ten Deadly Myths of Programming

1. The size of the audience is EVERYTHING. If there are not 40 people, then I have failed. Numbers should never be an evaluation of success. The size of the audience is more important to your ego than to the benefit of the person present and the program.
2. All programs cost a good deal of money to succeed or Spending=Success. The amount of funds has nothing to do with the potential of the event. Speakers are almost always free and publicity supplies are provided by the department.
3. If you succeed with one kind of program then you should use it exclusively. There really is such a thing as too much of a good thing. People are not going to go to the same kind of program every time. You have a diverse floor that will need diverse programs.
4. Programming is easy and does not require much work. Looks can be deceiving. Programs that don't have a lot of work put into them will inevitably look that way. The message is that you don't care about your programs - and then people will respond to you that way. It is the program that is well thought out, organized, and publicized that looks quality.
5. Doing everything yourself is the best way to program. No one says that you have to do this all by yourself. You can involve fellow staff members or even better your own floor members. That way you receive the benefits of awarded creativity, less individual work, alternative ideas, and helping others take leadership!!
6. Planning ahead is dumb because things will change before then and besides, my residents won't plan ahead to be there. If course things will change, but you have to account for that. A well planned program can withstand those last minute changes - especially if you account for possible problems with you plan.
7. There's nothing to do on this campus. There is always something to do on a college campus. Take your residents to something they would not normally think to do like a student organization meeting or even something a bit out there like bowling becomes a great time when a group goes. Remember a strong community creates much of its own growth.
8. If the program is good the publicity isn't important or Word-of-Mouth is the best way to publicize. Publicity is vital to people responding to your program. If nobody knows the facts then nobody goes. Many great program have died in their tracks because of poor attention to publicity.
9. It's not my fault that they don't want to do anything. OK, so maybe it's not exactly your fault, but you have to work pretty hard to totally un-motivate a whole floor of residents. If you can get relationships established with your floor members and them with each other they naturally will do all kinds of activities together - are you starting to see a theme here.
10. Pizza Equals Community. It is simply not true. Think about what exactly does equal community in your eyes. If the relationships on your floor are strong then they will show up without food.

Author unknown

Why Programs Fail

Poor Design:

- ♦ Programs did not take into account the needs and interest of the residents. Organizers had an outwardly negative attitude towards the program.

Lack of Support:

- ♦ Did not clearly communicate program goals and purpose with staff and residents.

Horrible Location and Time:

- ♦ Location unknown or unheard of amongst the residents.
- ♦ Ignored other activities that could have conflict (mid-terms, finals, holidays, campus events, RA programs, etc.
- ♦ Distance of programs too far or inconvenient.
- ♦ Physical structure of location uncomfortable or distracting.

Major Disorganization:

- ♦ Facilitator uninformed and unprepared for the specific topic.
- ♦ Unable to reserve rooms/equipment ~~ planning did not begin early enough.
- ♦ Everyone assumed that "someone else is taking care of it"
- ♦ Neglected to follow University procedures and/or Hall Director expectations.

Awful Publicity:

- ♦ Overkill - too many posters, and the residents become immune to the info.
- ♦ Content of publicity did not take into account diversity of the residents.
- ♦ Publicity too "busy" - make good use blank space!
- ♦ Too early (residents forgot about it).
- ♦ Too late (residents already made other plans).

No Follow-up (Whatever):

- ♦ Organizers simply assumed that the program was fine, regardless of what attendees may have said or suggested. No one asked attendees what they thought of the program.
- ♦ Organizers took advantage of volunteers without recognizing them for donating their time and energy.

Original Source Unknown

Ten Steps to Winning Publicity

1. Make your message as short as possible:

- ♦ The brain can only absorb so many words in a few seconds.
- ♦ If you plan to use flyers on your bulletin boards, make your message few words.

2. Make your headlines memorable:

- ♦ The headline is often all a person reads. It has to draw the viewer in by intrigue or by giving them a good idea what the event is about.
- ♦ How often do you read the small print in a flyer or poster?

3. Choose easy to read words:

- ♦ People will rarely slow down to figure out a long or difficult word.

4. Know your audience:

- ♦ Who are you trying to reach? What do they want?

5. Use Upper and Lower Case Lettering:

- ♦ Science has proven that is easier to read when both are used...
- ♦ CAN YOU IMAGINE TRYING TO READ A WHOLE PAGE OF THIS?

6. Use lettering that is readable:

- ♦ Use fonts that are simple and "clean."
- ♦ Funky fonts have a place but don't get carried away. Any one piece of publicity should have two (never more than three) styles of font.

7. Color is a valuable tool:

- ♦ Choose a set of colors like you do a theme for your program. Be consistent with use of those colors in all your advertising. Different color combinations are especially effective and readable.

Black on Yellow

White on Red or other Dark Colors

Yellow on Black

But even these can be over done! If white is your background stick to dark colors and don't use more than three colors of font/text on individual publicity.

8. Be creative with shape:

- ♦ Unusual shapes will stick out more on a crowded bulletin board.
- Who said you always have to put your publicity on paper?

9. Location is very important:

- ♦ Come up with unusual and eye-grabbing locations.

10. Consider and evaluate your advertising carefully:

- ♦ Advertising is crucial and can make or break a program. Evaluate each portion of your campaign separately and then look at them as a whole.