

Section 4: Student Development & Building Community

Student Development

One of our roles as a residence hall staff is to serve as educators of students. As an educator, our primary emphasis is on **promoting the development of students**. Our challenge is to provide a residence hall experience that will positively affect the development of our residents.

Development is the personal growth of people. Changes will occur in interests, social skills, intellectual abilities, attitudes, values, future goals, emotional maturity, autonomy and relationships throughout our life. Each of these parts of development is interwoven. Development in one area is influenced by development in another with each building on the other. This is a life-long process. A foundation for future growth is built prior to and during the college years. **The result is a competent, well-rounded individual who can meet the challenges of adult life.**

How to Foster Development

The main ingredient in fostering development is **creating an atmosphere that offers support, challenges and the chance to learn from successes, mistakes and disappointments**. This means developing a positive community, making conversation and confrontation about policies a learning experience and providing programs that expose students to valuable information and new experiences. This approach is what differentiates a residence hall from a dorm. A residence hall is much more than just a place to sleep.

The Challenge

Our challenge is to foster the growth and development of our residents. This growth does not happen by accident (although some good things are the result of serendipity). **It requires thoughtful planning** and a calculated approach. You will want to establish an intentional environment of quiet hours, community building events, educational programs, social engagements, staff that earns respect, a feeling that students have a sense of belonging and identity with their floor and hall and a sense of pride and respect for their campus residence.

The tangible evidence of your impact by interacting with residents and through programming will be a visible shift of your residents from a self-orientation to integration. Since most new students to the residence halls (first year students primarily) are initially concerned about adapting to the new environment and their new sense of independence and responsibility, it is not surprising they are absorbed with “survival” issues. This is where the hall staff can have a powerful impact. **Our goal is to encourage their sense of belonging and making a smooth transition so that the developmental path of movement from a self-orientation to an integration level that includes actively contributing to the hall can take place.** This growth and movement toward integration can make the community on your floor/section/house or hall flourish.

How Students Develop

In order to provide experiences that enhance development, it is important to understand how students develop. Research indicates that experiences within the following four categories promote the development of individuals:

- 1. Sense of Belonging**
- 2. Acquiring Knowledge and Skills**
- 3. Choosing Informed Attitudes**
- 4. Self-Responsibility**

1) Sense of Belonging

A sense of belongingness is crucial to an individual's development and growth. It includes having the ability to get along with others, feel acceptance and approval from them, know one's role within a group or relationship, and feel its importance. Belongingness can be seen and evaluated in several areas: **emotional autonomy, interdependence, relationships with peers, and intimate relationships.**

As staff members, you can promote and support belongingness within your floor community. You can develop an environment in which residents are able to develop close relationships with others, be involved in floor activities and decisions, resolve problems effectively, and meet their own academic and personal goals. Here are some ways in which you can do that:

- Approach each resident as an individual.
- Recognize each individual's needs and strengths.
- Develop and maintain trust in relationships.
- Listen to each person's views, without necessarily agreeing with those views.
- Utilize helping skills in problem-solving.
- Provide support during conflicts and adversity.
- Encourage each person's successes.

Consider the Following When Assessing “Belonging” of your Residents:

- Is the person dependent on parents and/or peers?
- Do you see a constant need for reassurance from others?
- Do the person's relationships include the element of mutual respect?
- Can the person identify his/her own strengths and weaknesses?
- Does the person take risks to change things about him/herself that s/he doesn't like?
- Are the person's choices his/her own or directed by others?
- Can the person resolve conflict within self?
- Does the person communicate and accept statements of worth and caring?

Possible Task Timeline to Encourage a Sense of Belonging

Before the Hall Opens:

- Prepare door decorations, information signs, bulletin boards, and check-in forms.

Move in Days:

- Be visible, available, and helpful to incoming students.
- Begin to become acquainted with each resident beyond the “hi” level.
- Encourage residents to participate in Orientation Week activities.
- Involve returning residents in forming a welcoming committee or buddy system on the floor.
- Provide assistance for academic concerns (i.e., general registration, buying textbooks, tours, etc.).

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Week One:

- Conduct floor/section meeting informing residents of policies, emergency procedures, staff functions, and campus resources.
- Check on new students and new residents. Be aware of their adjustment to a new section/floor/hall/college/home.
- Continue to be aware of academic issues/deadlines (i.e., first days of classes, drop & add).

Weeks Two and Three:

- Establish a community agreement stating guidelines for the floor environment. Include use and care of physical facilities, standards of acceptable/unacceptable behavior and behavioral consequences of infractions, desired activities and projects, format and goals of floor government.
- Continue individual contacts with each resident discussing backgrounds, interests, and concerns.

Continually:

- Be available for residents on a regular basis so they will feel at ease when approaching you with concerns. Maintain an open door policy.
- Help residents understand college/hall/floor/section/house policies and channels for input and change.
- Promote a quiet, safe atmosphere for residents.
- Assess floor/section/hall/house environment. Consider quantity and quality of interaction among members, discipline concerns, individual or group needs to be addressed through programming or personal contact, maintenance, or food service concerns.
- Confront and mediate community/roommate conflicts.
- Confront policy violations as well as any behavior that is potentially damaging to individuals or property.
- Stress and promote acceptance of differences in others. Confront inappropriate behavior in the area.
- Be able to assess the personal development of each resident in all life areas.
- Be aware of the academic goals and concerns for each resident. Provide necessary support or resource information.
- Program for assessed/expressed needs.

Sense of Belonging Accomplished

Obviously, you have the greatest impact on a resident's belongingness in your specific floor/section environment. You can encourage belongingness by helping build positive self-esteem and supporting your residents as they begin and maintain mature relationships with parents, peers, and intimates. **If you can observe your residents feeling secure and comfortable on the floor, interacting closely with floor members, developing a positive role in the community, and working to improve the community, you are accomplishing your goal.**

2) Acquiring Knowledge & Skills

The college experience centers on the attainment of knowledge. Knowledge is sought and gathered not only in textbooks and classrooms but in all environments and situations that a college student experiences. **Acquiring knowledge includes increasing self-awareness, adjusting to one's surroundings, gathering and incorporating information, and learning effective decision-making and problem-solving skills.** A student's living environment can make a significant contribution in this area.

As a hall staff member, you have the opportunity to foster knowledge acquisition within your floor community. You will promote an environment conducive to learning, serve as an educator, and offer referrals and resources to the residents of your floor. Here are various ways in which this can be accomplished:

- Encourage self-awareness and provide personal feedback to individuals in that area.
- Be knowledgeable of campus resources in order to make effective referrals.
- Model the problem-solving process.
- Challenge individuals to seek knowledge.
- Commit yourself to a strong effort in educational programming.

Consider the following when identifying the knowledge and skills being acquired by your residents:

- Is the person aware of his/her own interests, likes/dislikes?
- Is the person able to identify his/her own strengths and weaknesses?
- Can the person articulate his/her own skills and abilities?
- Does the person have a sense of his/her own needs and values?
- Does the person use new information to reflect on personal needs/values/beliefs?
- Does the person consider how his/her behavior reflects her/his needs/values/beliefs?
- Does the person draw conclusions based on myths or assumptions?
- Is the person able to transfer previously learned knowledge to new situations?

Possible Task Timeline to Encourage Knowledge & Skill Acquisition

Weeks One and Two:

- Help residents know resources of staff and facilities within the college.
- Note and respond to initial academic concerns of residents (i.e., knowing advisor, feeling comfortable in classroom setting).
- Inform residents of the purpose and value of educational programs.
- Ask for topic ideas of immediate interest to floor members.
- Use floor input and your own assessment of floor needs to choose first program topic.
- Note topics of general interest as well as individual interest topics. (This will aid you in follow-up contacts and future program planning).

Acquiring Knowledge and Skills Accomplished

The scope of learning is immense in a college setting. Residents are gaining not only subject information and job-related skills, but also specific life skills and experiences. As a staff member, you are a key educator beyond the classroom. **If you can observe your residents being actively involved in academics, seeking knowledge via programming, making informed decisions, sharing (and encouraging sharing of) ideas and beliefs, and serving as a source of input for the community, you are accomplishing your goal.**

3) Choosing Informed Attitudes & Values

Another part of the college learning experience is developing a complete acceptance of one's self and others. That acceptance encompasses backgrounds, lifestyles, belief and value systems, and cultures. To attain it, **residents must begin to evaluate their own attitudes and values, be willing to listen and try to understand, and make a commitment to be constantly relearning.**

The attitudes and values that each resident holds will have an impact on all aspects of her/his life. Consider how a person's values will influence his/her self-esteem, relationships with others, academic involvement, and career and lifestyle choices. As a residential life staff member you will have the opportunity to challenge and support each individual's personal growth in this area:

- Develop and model respect for each person's personal dignity and worth
- Recognize and understand each resident's beliefs and values.
- Be willing to share your own values and beliefs.
- Encourage and support ethical decision-making.
- Role model appreciation for diversity.

The Following will Signify Residents' Growth or Need for Growth in this Area:

- Does the person feel comfortable with his/her own personal qualities and skills?
- Does the person show acceptance of those with differing backgrounds, lifestyles, and cultures?
- Does the person seek exposure to cultural, geographical, and ethnic differences?
- Does the person use accurate information to determine and reflect on his/her personal value system?
- Does the person avoid labeling others?
- Does the person avoid making generalizations about individuals or groups?
- Does the person discourage stereotyping and provide accurate information to others when it occurs?

Possible Task Timeline to Encourage Growth

Before the Hall Opens:

- Take time to examine your beliefs and from where and how they originated.
- Practice articulating your beliefs so that you provide a clear message of what you believe.

First Month:

- Begin to become familiar with each resident's beliefs and values.
- Encourage residents to share personal information.
- Encourage interaction between people of differing backgrounds and cultures.
- Become aware of campus resources for referrals in this area.
- Cultivate discussion by asking questions (ex: continuum questions)

Continually:

- Make the effort to understand each resident's values, beliefs, and motivations.
- Be available for residents with personal concerns.
- Keep campus resources in mind and make referrals when needed.
- Encourage individuals to express their values and beliefs.
- Encourage each person's own decision-making versus decisions influenced by peer pressure.
- Challenge residents to consider viewpoints other than their own.
- Work with floor officers and residents to maintain positive interaction between all floor members.
- Confront prejudicial attitudes and discriminating behavior.
- Challenge inaccurate information about groups or individuals.

Choosing Informed Attitudes and Values Accomplished

Your effectiveness in this area can be seen in the actions of your residents. **As you see them striving to develop and express their values, demonstrating an understanding for acceptance of diversity, showing a concern and helpfulness for others, and having an awareness of issues in their community and world, know that you are accomplishing your goal.**

4) Self-Responsibility

Self-responsibility integrates one's sense of identity and purpose. **It involves having trust in one's skills and abilities, accepting responsibility for one's decisions and actions, determining one's career and life plans, and taking risks in order to achieve personal growth.**

Teaching self-responsibility is a primary goal for you as a hall staff member. You will find a teaching opportunity in your one-on-one helping interactions, discipline situations, educational programs, and in your advising sessions. It is through these situations that you can help residents gain a valuable life tool—the skill and ability to be responsible for one's self.

- Role model self-responsibility.
- Recognize each resident as an individual (become aware of individual abilities, values, lifestyles, and motivations).
- Encourage residents to take responsibility for their actions.
- Challenge residents to work out their own problems.
- Delegate responsibility to floor members.
- Provide educational programs designed to address major areas such as self-esteem, decision-making and problem-solving, interpersonal relationships, values clarification, and career and life planning.

Consider the Following when Evaluating your Residents' Sense of Responsibility.

- How would you describe the person's sense of self-esteem?
- Does the person have a realistic view of him/herself?
- Does the person have confidence in his/her abilities and talents?
- Is the person able to make his/her own decisions and have faith in those decisions?
- Does the person believe that he/she has control over his/her own life?
- Is the person willing to take responsibility for his/her own actions?
- Is the person able to take risks in seeking personal growth?
- Does the person have a sense of what is important to him/her and organize his/her time accordingly?
- Does the person recognize the importance of physical fitness and nutrition and incorporate those into her/his lifestyle?
- Does the person have a balanced lifestyle –including academics, work, physical and social activity, rest, and leisure time?

Possible Task Timeline to Encourage Self Responsibility

First Month:

- Inform residents of staff roles, hall policies and procedures.
- Encourage residents to participate in floor activities.
- Model positive interaction with all floor members.
- Establish a community agreement setting guidelines for the floor/section community and its individual members.
- Be sensitive to the needs and skill of representatives as they begin to assume the responsibilities of government.

Continually:

- Encourage residents to contribute to the floor/section/hall/house community.
- Be direct and assertive in stating your own wants and needs and support others doing the same.
- Demonstrate assertiveness and respect for others when confronting policy violations or other inappropriate actions.
- Encourage residents to confront behavior which violates the rights of others or has a negative impact on the community.
- Show your support for the community agreement and encourage others to do the same. (Evaluate and adjust the agreement if necessary).
- Encourage residents to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
- Promote an awareness of community and world issues on your floor.

Self Responsibility Accomplished

Self-responsibility is a major aspect of personal growth. It encompasses the areas of belongingness, acquiring knowledge, and choosing attitudes, and extends even further. You will be able to recognize self-responsibility daily in the actions of your residents. **When you see them showing confidence, acting assertively, taking responsibility for their actions, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, thriving in interpersonal relationships, and committing to career and life plans, you also see a mission accomplished.**

Summary

The philosophical basis for our Mission Statement is drawn from a wide variety of well-known theorists such as Perry, Kohlberg, and Chickering. The practical basis and applications were developed by the Residential Life para-professional and professional staff. It was created by our staff, for our staff.

The mission we've presented to you here is certainly no small task. But consider the opportunity it offers—it is the opportunity to teach and learn in four major areas of personal growth. It is the opportunity to maximize your potential and the potential of others.

Adapted from the Mission Statement poster by Lyn Jakobsen and LuAnn Krager, Copyright 1986.

Adapted from work down by Wendy Buettow, Tracy Wiseman, and Sheri Spotanski, 1987.

Adapted from Mission: University of Nebraska, Residential Education, The University of Nebraska, Lincoln

In Search of Community

No one expects the campus to be problem free, and surely it is unrealistic to view the modern college as an island divorced from the outside world. But neither can colleges and universities live comfortably with a climate of endless ambiguity about how campus life decisions should be made.

How then should we proceed?

What is needed, we believe, is a larger, more integrative vision of community in higher education, one that focuses not on the length of time students spend on campus, but on the quality of the encounter, and relates not only to social activities, but to the classroom, too. The goal as we see it is to clarify both academic and civic standards, and above all, to define with some precision the enduring values that fosters a community of learning.

In response to this challenge, we propose six principles that provide an effective formula for day-to-day decision making on the campus and, taken together, define the kind of community every college and university should strive to be.

First, a college is an educationally **purposeful** community, a place where faculty and students share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on campus.

Second, a college is an **open** community, a place where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

Third, a college is a **just** community, a place where the sacredness of the person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

Fourth, a college is a **disciplined** community, a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

Fifth, a college is a **caring** community, a place where the well-being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

Sixth, a college is a **celebrative** community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared.

From Campus Life: In Search of Community, a special report from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990. pp 7-8.

Practical Ways to Build Community

Open and Just

Our communities are open and just places. We advocate that community members value the uniqueness of each individual. In a just community, the rights of the individual are respected and appreciation of diversity is important.

- Keep your door open and encourage others to do so at appropriate times.
- Use introduction exercises at the first few floor meetings.
- Invite people to join you on your way to meals.
- Identify the “shy” or unconnected people and invite them to meals or activities.
- Visit residents in their rooms when you do not have a business reason to do so.
- Use bulletin boards to post information about your residents as well as activities happening on the floor, in the building, or around campus.
- Invite people to your room.
- Encourage introductions at meals.
- Invite your Head Resident and Area Coordinator to meetings or informal activities to increase his/her exposure as a person and resource.
- Post photographs of floor members and events on bulletin boards or in bathrooms.
- Introduce floor residents to dining service, security and custodial/physical plant staff members.
- Set up informal “talk sessions” in your room where people can drop in to visit with you or other floor residents.
- As you set up programs, follow inclusive programming guidelines. Role model inclusive language.
- Intentionally get to know all of your residents, not just the ones you identify with the most.

Disciplined

We provide our communities with the structure to develop governing principles. Students are responsible for abiding by community standards and accepting responsibility for their behavior. All students are responsible for holding each other accountable to community standards.

- Show interest in and support for student involvement activities including floor and hall activities, student government, athletics, and student activities (CAB) events.
- Establish working floor committees to assist you in floor programming.
- Allow others to plan programs and support them.
- Stress the positive aspects and be able to explain the rationale for rules and policies.
- Confront students on violations of floor norms/expectations and college policies.
- Periodically at floor meetings evaluate floor expectations and how realistic they are and whether residents are meeting them.
- Encourage students to approach each other with concerns rather than always coming to you.
- Invite student senate leaders to floor meetings to discuss campus issues.

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Empowering

Our communities are empowering to students. We provide them with opportunities to contribute and receive from the community. Ultimately, the development of a community is dependent upon the students who live within it.

- Encourage students who are settled to help others move in.
- Show interest in and support for student senate and encourage student involvement.
- Establish working committees to assist with programming. Encourage others to plan programs.
- Attend hall events and programs floor residents create.
- Publish a floor newsletter.
- Involve residents in the responsibility for maintenance, improvements, and security.
- Encourage the use of an interest inventory in planning floor programs. Utilize residents willing to teach or wanting to present a program.
- Spread our responsibilities. Do not let the same people do all the work.
- Periodically at floor meetings, evaluate floor expectations and how realistic they are and whether residents are meeting them.
- Encourage student to approach each other rather than always coming to you.
- If any floor residents are concerned about rumors that are circulating on the floor, give them the opportunity to lead floor meetings to discuss the problem.
- Post signs containing information about campus events and happenings.
- Meet regularly with members of the floor to discuss activities, share ideas, discuss problems, etc.
- Provide information and other resources to help students address their own problems/concerns.

Supportive

Our communities are supportive environments. Students grow as a result of the inevitable challenges, crises, and conflicts that they experience. We are dedicated to supporting students during these experiences in an effort to foster maturity, independence, confidence, and life-long learning skills.

- Plan floor activities such as Orientation activities, birthdays, etc.
- Recognize individual achievements at floor meetings and/or on bulletin boards.
- Plan floor programs and projects early in the year.
- Plan spontaneous activities. Sounds incongruous at first but take advantage of all sorts of movies, sports, birthdays, etc. to get people together.
- Keep your floor residents alert to the achievements of others.
- Attend concerts, sporting events, etc. in which your floor residents are participating. Have congratulatory signs posted for the residents on the floor.

Agenda for CF First Floor Meeting

Relax...remember, you have our trust and confidence. You know your stuff and you will do a great job!!!

Icebreaker/Introductions

- Introduce yourself**
 - Name, hometown, year in school, major, activities in which you are involved.
- Have each resident introduce themselves**
 - Name, hometown, year in school, major, activities in which they may wish to be or are involved. You may wish to do another ice-breaker if you would like or have time.

Introduce your role as a Collegiate Fellow

- Resources and referrals**
 - Encourage residents to ask questions of you regarding where to go on campus for a variety of issues. Remember to indicate that if you don't know where to go you will find out together.
- Listening, talking, helping**
 - Encourage residents to seek you out for any assistance-personal, academic, roommate, or social.
- Programming**
 - Events, activities, and community building...explain your role as the chief community builder through working with residents to come up with various programs and activities to get the residents together.
- Reporter/Agent of the College**
 - Relate to your residents that there may be times when you must report activities and behaviors that are not conducive to community living to your supervisor. In those instances, the students will be contacted by the coordinator to inform them of the incident report as well as to offer the opportunity to discuss the situation.

Policies and Procedures

- Maintenance requests**
 - Explain that residents can send work orders directly to Physical Plant via the Res Life website. Show them how, if possible.
- 24 hour courtesy hours**
 - Explain the need for residents to be able to sleep or study as they need to. Remind them their first obligation is to their academic life and this is done to support them in that endeavor.
- Quiet Hours**
 - 10:00pm-8:00am Sunday-Thursday; 12:00am-8:00am Friday and Saturday. If you have talked about this with among your hall staff, let residents know what you've decided. Noise should be contained in rooms at this point.
- Furniture**
 - All College-owned furniture must stay in the rooms, with the exception of bed frames and lofts.
- Visitation**
 - Definitions:**
 - **Guest:** any person not directly affiliated with Gustavus as a student or employee.
 - **Visitor:** any Gustavus student or employee who is not an assigned resident of the particular room, suite, apartment, or house. NOTE: Employees who enter student units for the purpose of fulfilling job responsibilities (i.e. custodial, physical plant, Residential Life staff, Campus Safety Officers, etc.) are not considered visitors.

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- **Visitation hours:** the time period during which resident students may host visitors and guests of the opposite sex in their individual rooms. Visitation hours apply to all residence hall rooms and units.

Visitation hours (according to Adjusted Year in Residence)

First-year campus residences:

- Sunday through Thursday: 9 AM to 1 AM.
- Friday and Saturday, visitation is permitted from 9 AM to 2 AM.
- Twenty-four hour visitation is permitted in the lobby, recreational space, TV lounge, study areas, computer lab, and kitchen of each residence hall.
- Hallways and section lounges are NOT considered 24-hour visitation areas.

Sophomore, junior, and senior campus residences:

- Sunday through Thursday: 9 AM to 1 AM.
- Friday and Saturday, visitation is permitted 24 hours a day.
- Twenty-four hour visitation is permitted in the lobby, recreational space, TV lounge, study areas, computer lab, and kitchen of each hall.
- Hallways on single sex floors are NOT considered 24 hour visitation areas.

Smoking and tobacco

- Please remind the residents that they are not permitted to smoke or chew tobacco in their room, hallway, or common areas. Persons smoking should go outside.

Alcohol

- Please remind residents they are not permitted to drink alcohol if they are not of legal drinking age. Also, underage rooms should not have any alcohol bottles or cans present. Explain the consequences of consuming alcohol (see the alcohol grid).

Emergency Information

- **Fire Alarm:** explain the need to leave and move away from the building and across the street. Explain the consequences of remaining in a building where a fire alarm is sounding.
- **Severe weather:** refer to information sheet in the rooms and your posting area so they know when they will be updated and notified of severe weather warnings.
- **Medical emergencies:** encourage them to call 911 and then call Campus Safety.

Lock Outs

- Explain the process of getting into their room during CF duty hours (page CF on duty must call 933 prefix) and during all other times (contact CF in building or contact Campus Safety)

Lost keys

- Encourage students to report lost keys immediately to the Residential Life Office so that a re-core can occur. Emergency re-cores can happen after business hours if a key has been lost with identification.

Storage

- Explain that the CF on duty has access to get their belongings out of the storage room.

Vacuum

- Explain that you have access to a vacuum that they may use.

Other cleaning supplies available in the custodial closets.

Trash Chute/Pizza boxes/Recycling

- Encourage residents to place pizza boxes and recycling in the location specified by your custodian. Trash should be sent down the trash chute, or put into the bins provided.

Keep hallways clear of personal belongings

- Encourage residents to keep their belongings in their rooms to ensure the

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hallways are clear for emergency situations/evacuations as well as the safety of the belongings.

- Phone problems**
 - Call Telecommunications or take your broken phone to the telecommunications office in the basement of Olin Hall.
- Computer problems**
 - Contact the Information Technologies Department on the first floor of Olin Hall.
- Hall Facilities**
 - Explain the location of: Kitchen, Laundry, Computer Lab, TV Lounge, Game Room, Etc.

Hall and Area Staff

Introduce the other staff team members as well as explain their function and relation to the residents. Encourage students to seek other staff members out.

- Other CFs:** note names, floors, rooms
- Head Resident and Area Coordinator, if not already introduced**
- Residential Life Administration**
 - Let residents know that the Residential Life office will be using email as the primary mode of communication. Any announcements regarding break housing, housing selection, etc. will be communicated via students' Gustavus email accounts.
- Activities**
 - Brainstorm ideas of things in which they are interested (intramural sports, theatre, music, etc.)
 - Plan first event to occur within first week of classes.
 - Talk about going to meals as a group during new student orientation
 - Offer a campus tour, hall tour, or connect with a brother/sister floor/section.
- Ask if there are any questions.**