

EXAMPLE

Winthrop University Student Support Unit Continuous Improvement Report 2018-19

Name of Unit: **Residence Life**

Contact Person: XX

Date Submitted: 2018-19 academic year

Winthrop University's Mission Statement: Winthrop University provides personalized and challenging undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education programs of national caliber within a context dedicated to public service to the State of South Carolina...The values of service, excellence, diversity, community, and leadership provide the foundation of Winthrop's continuing development and shape Winthrop's continuing success...Winthrop students acquire and develop knowledge, skills, capabilities, and values that enrich their lives and prepare them to meet the needs and challenges of the contemporary world, including the ability to communicate effectively, appreciate diversity, work collaboratively, synthesize knowledge, solve complex problem, and adapt to change. [Full mission statement: <https://www.winthrop.edu/president/default.aspx?id=1620>]

Unit's Mission Statement or Statement of Purpose: The mission of the **Office of Residence Life** is to provide undergraduate students with safe, inclusive, and educational residential environments that intentionally challenge and support them to embrace global citizenship, civility, and self-accountability. Through engaging and meaningful interactions, Residence Life promotes the holistic development of all students from the perspective of a residential liberal arts education. This mission aligns with the institutional and college missions of educating students to meet the needs and challenges of the contemporary world.

Outcome #1: Provide a safe, inclusive, and healthy residential living community, which supports learning and fosters a positive experience for residents.	This outcome is narrowly defined, specific, measurable, and aligns with the mission statement.
Alignment of outcome with the Winthrop Plan (Goal and Strategic Initiative): Goal 2 – Enhance quality of the student experience	
Alignment of outcome with the Division's Strategic Plan: N/A	These alignments indicate the relationship between the unit, division, and university.
Alignment of outcome with the University Learning Competencies (ULCs), if applicable: N/A	
Summary Statement of Assessment-based Accomplishments and Improvements: (summary statement based on prior year's Continuous Improvement Action Plan)	Summarizes changes made in 2018-19 for this outcome.
Based on last year's (2017-18) analysis of student survey data, in 2018-19 the department conducted more extensive Resident Advisor training, enhanced communications with Operations, and invested in housing software. In 2018-19, student survey data indicated greater student satisfaction with the check-in process (supported by the housing software) and response time for facilities requests,	Summarizes impact of change.

however, they were less satisfied with the RA staff and their residence life experience, in general, as compared to 2016-17 and 2017-18 data.

Activities:

Provides a detailed account of the activities undertaken in 2018-19 for this outcome. Referencing back to the 2017-18 Report, these activities align with the Action Plan described for 2018-19.

The activities undertaken in 2018-19 focused on concerns raised by students in our 2017-18 assessment efforts. Specifically, students addressed connectedness with Residence Life staff, the conditions of residence halls, interactions with Operations staff, and ways to make the housing process less onerous.

To enhance the residential experience, this year we intentionally focused on additional training for student leaders (i.e., RAs) in Residence Life. RAs met as a group on a monthly basis with Student Affairs staff. Some of these meetings were conversational in nature (e.g., understanding the first-year students' expectations, first-generation students' needs), while others were training sessions (e.g., providing a sense of community among floor residents, health-related concerns). The intent of these sessions was to provide the RAs with a holistic understanding of the importance of Residence Life and the role it plays on a residential campus. These efforts are one of an institutional multifaceted plan to increase student retention, especially of first-year students. (1 – RA Training Report – dates, topics, and attendance)

Student Affairs staff met regularly with Operations to improve overall communication and timeliness in responding to student maintenance requests. The Director of Residence Life and the Vice President of Student Affairs engaged with the Vice President of Operations to discuss larger concerns related to the actual buildings. The Director of Residence Life met monthly with the Director of Operations to address direct student-related interactions with Operations (e.g., recurring maintenance requests, response time for addressing maintenance requests). (2 – Meeting minutes – VP meetings; 3 – Meeting minutes – Director meetings)

The department purchased new housing software to allow for streamlined maintenance reporting and follow through with residents. The software also streamlined the room inventory process to ensure more accurate and complete physical plant conditions on move-in and move-out. (4 – Software screen shot; 5 – Room inventory screen)

Assessment Method #1:

Student Affairs Survey, Residence Life Section – This online survey is administered to all students on an annual basis. The survey is a good assessment method for this outcome since it assesses the residential student experience across a variety of parameters. For this specific outcome, we will focus on the subset of Residence Life questions that address RAs, facilities, and the housing process. Although the survey contains questions from all the units that comprise the Division of Student Affairs, the data can be disaggregated by functional areas for ease of distribution and analysis. The survey is developed in Qualtrics. (6 – Student Affairs Survey)

The survey link is sent to all students via an email from the Vice President of Student Affairs during the last month of the spring semester. The invitation email encourages students to complete the survey and cites improvements and considerations that the Division of Student Affairs has addressed based on information gathered from the survey in previous years. In addition to two reminder emails, the RAs are encouraged to remind students to complete the survey. The class (i.e., first-year,

Includes reference to documentation.

Clear identification of tool and discussion of how the tool supports the outcome.

Includes reference to documentation.

Indirect measure of assessment

Data collection process is clearly described – who, what, where, when.

sophomores, juniors, seniors) that has the highest response rate, prorated across number of students from that class who actually reside in the halls, receives an ice cream party. The portion of the survey that addresses residence life does allow nonresidential students to skip this section.

Data are shared and discussed with staff.

The VP's administrative assistant extracts and distributes the data. Each unit within the division receives the aggregated data and the data for their unit. During the division's 2-day retreat in June of each year, the data are discussed and actions are determined for the subsequent year. This data discussion is often the agenda for one of the two retreat days.

Target:

Clearly states the desired results.

At least a 75% positive response rating ("strongly agree" or "agree" responses on survey) on all items within the Residence Life section of the Student Affairs Survey. This target reflects a five-percentage point increase over the previous years. With the previous year's target attained and with additional programming within Residence Life, we felt it appropriate to raise the target. This keeps the division challenged to remain accountable to the students we serve.

Provides sound reasoning for the established target.

Assessment Results:

Of the 386 completed Student Affairs surveys, 89% (343/386) were residential students, and of those 328 students completed the Residence Life section. The overall response rate for residential students was 27% (328 out of 1,205 residential students). (7 – Student Affairs Survey Report: Residence Life Subset)

Provides information on number and percentage of respondents.

Includes reference to documentation.

The percentages below represent students who responded with "strongly agree" or "agree" responses to the survey items.

Data align with the method. These are actual Student Affairs Survey data.

Note the inclusion of % and # of students.

Among the satisfaction items regarding the Office of Residence Life and Professional Staff:

- 74% (243/328) of respondents were satisfied with their interactions with professional staff in the Residence Life main office.
- 82% (268/328) of respondents reported communication from Residence Life regarding housing procedures were clear and easy to understand.
- 74% (243/328) of respondents indicated communication from Residence Life regarding housing procedures were appropriately timed and provided the ability to respond with questions or concerns.

Clear and detailed presentation of data.

Among the items regarding satisfaction with the Resident Advisor (RA) staff:

- 59% (195/328) of respondents felt comfortable approaching their RA for assistance.
- 67% (220/328) of respondents felt Residence Life policies were consistently enforced by their RA.
- 67% (209/313) of respondents agreed that the residential experience had enhanced the overall college experience.

Among the items regarding satisfaction with facilities:

- 72% (236/328) of respondents were satisfied with the response time for their facilities requests.
- 62% (203/328) of respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of their residence hall.

Discussion of Assessment Results:

Discussion of target attainment.

Targets were not met for all items, with the exception of “communication from Residence Life regarding housing procedures were clear and easy to understand.” While more than two-thirds of students agreed that they had a positive residential experience, significant attention to efforts in this area are needed for this outcome.

Provides context for current concerns with the data.

Provides data from previous years and a discussion of these data in relation to current year data.

These results were quite unexpected, since they represent ratings lower than in previous years. In 2017-18, all questions earned satisfaction ratings ranging from 70% to 74%. While in 2016-17, satisfaction ratings for these questions ranged from 70% to 75%. The Residence Life staff is committed to addressing these data and putting actions into place that will provide a more fulfilling residential experience for our students. (8 – Student Affairs Survey trend data)

Indirect method of assessment.

Assessment Method #2:

Clear identification of tool and alignment of tool with the outcome.

Multiple methods of assessment are used (two distinct surveys).

The Opening of School Survey is administered online just following the fall move-in of new and returning students. The survey is a good assessment method for this outcome since it addresses the move-in process, which is crucial to a good transition to college for first-year students and a renewed sense of belonging and satisfaction for upper-class students. The intent of the survey is to determine areas for improvement within the check-in process and the physical residential facilities, as identified by students on or closely after Move-In Day. (9 – Opening of School Survey)

Includes reference to documentation.

The survey link is embedded in an email sent by the Director of Residence Life to all residential students. The invitation email encourages students to complete the survey and outlines previous improvements made to the move-in process based on student feedback. Two reminder emails are sent from the Director at one week intervals. RAs encourage students to participate in the survey. Signs are hung on each floor’s bulletin board across all the residence halls, urging students to complete the survey. The survey is developed in Qualtrics.

The data collection process is clearly described.

The Coordinator of Residence Life extracts and cleans the data, reporting aggregate and disaggregate data (by first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior). The Residence Life staff, in conjunction with the Vice President of Student Affairs, reviews the data during an October staff meeting and determines appropriate action plans.

Data are shared and discussed with staff.

Clearly stated expectation.

Target:

At least a 75% positive response rating (“very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” responses on survey) on the check-in process questions; at least 60% on facilities survey questions. These targets reflect a five-percentage point increase over the previous year. With the previous year’s target attained and with additional meetings, effort, and software focused on move-in and maintenance, we felt it appropriate to raise the target. This keeps the Office of Residence Life challenged to remain accountable to the students we serve.

Justification for target.

Note the use of number and percentage of students.

Assessment Results:

The Opening of School Survey had a participation rate of 41% of residential students (494/1205). Of those respondents, 47% were new students (233/494) and 53% (261/494) were returning students. (10 – Opening of School Survey Report)

Includes reference to documentation.

Residents were quite satisfied (responding “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” on the survey) with the actual move-in process, reporting that:

Clear and detailed presentation of data.

- 78% (363/467) were satisfied with the length of wait time and line length during check-in.
- 78% (362/467) were satisfied with on-site completion of check-in paperwork.
- 80% (375/467) were satisfied with the ease of the check-in process.
- 80% (374/467) were satisfied with the overall check-in process.
- 54% (233/428) reported they were welcomed by a Resident Advisor or other staff member when they arrived in their residence hall/apartment.

Data align with the method. These are actual Opening of School Survey data.

Residents' reported level of satisfaction (responding "very satisfied" and "mostly satisfied" on the survey) with their residential facilities upon move-in as follows:

Note use of % and # of students.

- 52% (224/428) were satisfied with the overall condition of their residence hall/apartment room.
- 55% (234/428) were satisfied with the overall cleanliness of their residence hall/apartment room.
- 50% (212/428) were satisfied with the condition of the furniture in their residence hall/apartment room.
- 40% (172/428) were satisfied with the condition of the bathroom in their residence hall/apartment room.
- 48% (205/428) were satisfied with the overall condition of the common spaces (e.g., study spaces, common rooms, laundry rooms) in their residence hall/apartment complex.

Discussion of Assessment Results:

Check-in Process:

Discussion addresses the survey data presented above.

As a department, we are quite pleased with the results of the student responses to the check-in process survey items. We have worked on tweaking this process for the past several years, and the target was met for four of the five items, specifically for the four process questions. We were a bit taken aback at the 54% satisfaction rating for being welcomed by a RA or other staff member because that has been "front and center" in our RA training protocols. We did not meet this target.

Additional training and monitoring is required to ensure students are welcomed by a Resident Advisor or other staff member when they arrive in their residence hall/apartment.

Discussion puts the data into context for the department.

Physical Residential Facilities:

We were not surprised by the results of the residential facilities items on the survey. Our residence halls are quite old and desperately in need of renovations or upgrades. The target was not met for any of the residential facilities items. This year's student responses align with those of past years. In 2017-18, all facilities questions earned satisfaction ratings ranging from 41% to 56%; in 2016-17, satisfaction ratings ranged from 40% to 54%. (11 – Opening of School Survey trend data)

Includes reference to documentation.

These data have been shared with the Board of Trustees, and the President is committed to making the needed renovations to be competitive with our peer institutions.

Continuous Improvement Action Plan for next year:

Based on the assessment results of the Student Affairs Survey Report: Residence Life Subset and the Opening of School Survey Report, the Department of Residence Life will address the following five items in 2019-20, focusing on facilities requests, check-in process, enhanced use of housing software, residence hall renovations, and ensuring a positive residential experience. The Department is committed to increasing student satisfaction with their residential experience.

The Action Plan addresses five distinct actions to take in 2019-20, all reflective of what was learned from the data.

A clear description of who, what, when, and how.

- Although the data indicate a slight increase in the percentage of students satisfied with the response time for facilities work requests, we did not meet our target. To address this concern in 2019-20, we will focus on developing and implementing processes that ensure student submitted facilities work requests are acknowledged in a timely fashion and that students are satisfied with the resulting work. To this end, the Residence Life Graduate Student (GA) will be reassigned to work primarily on student satisfaction relating to facilities; the GA will follow-up on completed work orders to ensure residents are satisfied with the work performed by the Operations and Housekeeping staffs. Residents will also receive an online survey following completion of the work to assess the timeliness, quality of work, and interactions with Operations and Housekeeping staff. These data will be monitored by the Residence Life GA.

Clear description of process.

- Although the check-in process was reported as quite satisfactory by students (i.e., all four survey items surpassed the target of 75% of students “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied”), we will implement an “Express Check-In” line for those who have completed the online forms prior to arrival. This should further reduce wait time and enhance the check-in experience. The student ambassadors, under the guidance of the Coordinator of Residence Life, will work through the details of this process during their training sessions in early August 2019 and implement the “Express Check-In” line for the fall 2019 move-in process.

- Building on the success of the housing software for the check-in process, we will continue to develop and enhance services and online processes to improve the residential student experience, including the use of the software for online housing selection, roommate selection, and housing applications. These are all features of the newly purchased software that the Director of Residence Life will be trained on during the fall 2019 semester. The online housing process will be implemented in spring 2020.

- Based on trend data for ten years and competition from our peer institutions, the administration was successful in obtaining monetary donations for renovations to the residence halls. In 2019-20, the focus will be on Young and Daniels residence halls, both first-year buildings, and Hunter residence hall, an upper-class building. Paint, lighting, bathrooms, flooring, and furniture will be addressed in the three buildings, along with a new elevator cab in Hunter. Based on current estimates, this work can be completed during summer 2019, thus prior to the opening of the 2019-20 academic year. Contingency plans include work to be conducted during the winter 2019 break. The timeline is currently set to complete all work prior to August 15, but the contractors have set up a contingency plan in the event they run into any unforeseen circumstances, considering the age of the buildings.

Although securing the funds was outside the purview of Residence Life, the Department has clearly developed renovation plans.

- Prior to move-in for the 2019-20 academic year:
 - Professional staff members will conduct walk-throughs of each residence hall to ensure all renovation and maintenance items have been completed and each hall is acceptable.
 - RAs and student workers will walk through each room and common space to ensure each area is ready for student use – issues will be reported to Residence Life to be addressed with Operations.
 - RAs will decorate each hallway and common space to enhance the visual feel and make each space as warm and inviting as possible.

A new plan to address this concern that just appeared in the current year and is not present in trend data.

- The Director of Residence Life, in conjunction with the Operations and Housekeeping staff, will develop a cleaning and maintenance timeline to ensure all summer tasks are completed in a timely fashion.
- The department is adamant about addressing the lower rating of student satisfaction with Resident Advisors received on this year's Student Affairs Survey. As discussed earlier, this is not in-line with previous years' data. Not knowing if this is an anomaly for one year, we still feel the need to address this concern. We will continue our schedule of meetings and trainings with the RAs as we did in 2018-19. Additionally, we will meet with our returning RAs during RA Orientation in early August to further discuss these data and try to obtain further insights as to the cause of these ratings and suggestions for improvement. The department will also conduct three first-year residential student focus groups and two upper-class residential student focus groups within the first six weeks of the academic year. The focus group protocol will explore their thoughts on floor community, relationships with RAs, expectations for their residential experience, and their current/past concerns with residential living.

Supporting Documentation

Supporting documentation is numbered and listed in the order in which it is presented in the report.

1. RA Training Report – dates, topics, and attendance
2. Meeting minutes – VP meetings
3. Meeting minutes – Director meetings
4. Software screen shot
5. Room inventory screen
6. Student Affairs Survey
7. Student Affairs Survey Report: Residence Life Subset
8. Student Affairs Survey trend data
9. Opening of School Survey
10. Opening of School Survey Report
11. Opening of School Survey trend data