

First Year Experience: The "BISON SUCCESS" Model

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The ten monthly dimensions we chose to adopt for programming at Howard University, Department of Residence Life are:

- **B**- Building Community (August)
- **I**- Involvement (September)
- **S**-Support Systems (September)
- **O**-Ongoing Understanding of Academic Needs (October)

- **N**- Navigating (October)

- **S**-Self-Identity (November)
- **U**-Unity in Community (November)
- **C**-Coming Home (January)
- **C**-Cultural Awareness (February)
- **E**-Encouraging Further Involvement (March)
- **S**-Service To Others (April)
- **S**-Saying Goodbye (April)

"BISON SUCCESS" Programming Model

August

- **B- Building Community**: The focus of this first dimension involves building a strong and cohesive community from the first day of move-in onward. The first few weeks are vital to the success of a solid community where residents feel a sense of belonging and pride in where they live and who they live with. The Resident Assistants role and a majority of the programming they do in these first couple of weeks should center upon building up their community into a place where residents feel comfortable, safe, and welcome.

September

- **I-Involvement**: The second dimension focuses upon encouraging residents to get involved in the campus community and/or the larger Washington, DC community. Programming centers upon educating residents about all the opportunities there are

to get involved, what the benefits are to getting involved with something, and highlighting what community service initiatives the residence halls are already involved in the community, what they are doing and why. The Resident Assistant's goal could include having each of the residents connected and involved in at least one thing outside of their own residence community by the end of the month and to recognize and celebrate those residents for getting involved in some way.

- **S-Support Systems:** The focus of the third dimension involves helping residents to develop support systems for themselves whether the focus is social, academic, emotional, physical, spiritual, and/or cultural. Resident Assistants play a big role in educating their residents to know what resources are either on campus for them or in the Howard community. The programming the resident assistants will conduct centers upon bringing the various resources into the living communities or giving the residents the tools they may need to seek out the resources on their own.

October

- **O-Ongoing Understanding of Academic Needs:** The focus of the fourth dimension involves understanding the academic strengths and weaknesses of the resident student's in the community. Programming should relate to these aspects. It is important that resident assistants celebrate those residents who are developing good study habits and to involve them in role modeling and tutoring opportunities. It is also important for the resident assistants to assess those residents who are beginning to struggle in their academic pursuits and to be aware of their needs and struggles as well as provide to them support through regular communication, advice, and guidance as well as helping to connect them to valuable academic support resources within the residence hall as well as on campus.
- **N – Navigating:** The focus of the fifth dimension involves providing programming to assist the resident student with information on learning to manage their course work. The resident assistants will provide the students with a template that will guide them in assessing their current academic progress for the semester. By aiding the first year resident student in viewing the academic terrain they will be better able to accomplish the goal of academic achievement.

November

- **S-Self-Identity:** The focus of the sixth dimension involves providing programming opportunities that allow residents to learn more about themselves and who they are or who they want to become. Programming provides opportunities for self-reflection as well as opportunities that challenge and celebrate the residents' concept of themselves and of others around them in the community.
- **U-Unity in Community:** The seventh dimension focuses on how united the residential community is and how the residents in this community support each other. The holiday season is a time to come together and celebrate. In addition the community needs to provide strength for each other over the stress of finals week and leaving for the long break. Programming needs to either center upon and celebrate the unity in the community or address the need to build more unity over this festive yet stressful time of year. Participate in various community service projects during the holiday time of year.

January

- **C-Coming Home:** The eighth dimension involves helping welcome residents back into their living communities. Programming focuses upon making new residents feel very welcome into the already established community as well as celebrating the arrival of returning residents for a new semester. Programming goals are developed around how to build an even stronger community over the second semester and how to better address the needs of residents and the community as a whole.

February

- **C-Cultural Awareness:** The ninth dimension involves creating an awareness in the resident assistant's community of the cultural diversity present both locally and globally and the value that this awareness has in the lives of the residents. Programming centers upon education and celebration of a variety of different cultures, values, lifestyles, and beliefs.

March

- **E-Encouraging Further Involvement:** The tenth dimension focuses upon encouraging residents to either get involved in the campus community (if they have not already) and/or the larger Washington, DC community and to recognize and celebrate those residents who have already been getting involved in some way. Programming centers upon educating residents about all the opportunities there are to get involved, what the benefits are to getting involved with something, and highlighting what residents are already involved in and what they are doing and why. The resident assistant's goal could include having each of the residents connected and involved in at least one thing outside of their own residence community by the end of the month.

April

- **S-Service To Others:** The eleventh dimension involves encouraging residents to get involved in community service, both on and off campus. Programming centers upon why providing service to others is not only very valuable and important but also extremely fulfilling. The resident assistants play a major role in helping either organize a project for the community or support the variety of service projects available in our community.
- **S-Saying Goodbye:** The twelfth and final dimension involves wrapping up the year and the residents' experience with their living community. It is important that the residents feel a sense of closure to this very unique, very impactful, very joyful, very trying (at times) experience. Programming focuses upon end-of-the-year recognition, awards, celebrations, and memories so that the residents feel that they are taking a piece of the experience away with them in a special way.