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Learning Experience Block 1: Tuesday, May 27 – 10:30 – 11:30 AM

Room by Room: An Interactive Exploration of Traditional Room Sizing & University Housing Trends in Ontario and Canada

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Robert Merentsov (Western University)

Target Audience: New Professionals

Summary: This proposal outlines a 50-minute interactive presentation that explores traditional room sizing in Canadian university housing amid a growing housing crisis. It examines how room dimensions affect mental health, social interactions, and accessibility while addressing increased on-campus housing demand. Participants will engage with taped-out floor plans and an interactive furniture rearrangement activity simulating spatial configurations in one of the smallest and one of the largest room types found in Ontario and Canada. The session uses statistical trends and design challenges to foster insights for balancing density with well-being, offering guidance for future residential design and policy development.

Beyond the Potluck: Building Better EDIDA Programming

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Paige Julian (Western University) & Ben-chanowk Jamir (University of Toronto)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: Many of the programs that we consider turn-key are no longer applicable to the communities that they are designed to support. Standardized annual programming saves time and provides an efficient way to serve community needs without doing additional yearly work in planning. The question to ask is how we ensure that the initiatives we create are evolving with the diverse needs of our students and the external factors that shape their environment. With global conflict and North American political tension challenging contemporary EDIDA principals, we seek to bring our community together in a shared effort to challenge our baseline practices for EDIDA and to bring awareness to any gaps. This session is designed to hear from other institutions and share statistics on the state of Canadian/ Ontario EDIDA needs, based on our student demographics. We will also share some of the programming happening at our institutions in support of EDIDA.



Successful Community Living: Resources for Students and Parents

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Rachel Simpson & Hareem Syed & Melissa Chaffe (Western University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: This session will explore the work Western Residence Life has done over the past year to implement resources for students and parents to support their transition to university. These resources are introduced to families in the summer with Western's Overnight Residence Experience, facilitated in collaboration with Student Experience. The connection then continues through Western Housing's website, including a "Living Together" section for students and a parent resource hub. These resources aim to proactively address common student concerns with community living and roommates, as well as parent concerns, including how to appropriately work with residence to best support their students.

Leading while Parenting: Our approach to work-life integration

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Jennifer Greene & Melissa Pratt Morgan (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: This session will focus on our journey through various roles in student housing that have led us to Senior leadership positions in our Department. We will present the leadership theories that ground our practice and how we strive to lead by example. Through storytelling and discussion this session will also focus on our successes and challenges with work-life integration, especially in the past year as parents. Our hope is for attendees to leave this session with tools and a renewed confidence in their leadership potential if the hope to or are navigating student housing roles while parenting.

Residence+- A Transition TO Residence Program

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Becky Shillington (Loyalist College)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: The Residence+ program offers incoming students a supported transition into the residence and college environment. The program is geared toward individuals who may need some additional support



Learning Experience Block 2: Tuesday, May 27 – 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Restorative Complexities: Justice, Practice, and Student Behaviour Management

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Kristin Lennan (University of Guelph)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: Restorative justice is common language in student behaviour management, but what is it and how is it done? There are ethical complexities attributed to the use of restorative justice in the post-secondary sector. It is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. The challenge for institutions then focuses on how to soften the edges and create space for relational and human-centered approaches in student behaviour management work within structures often focused on punishment. This presentation will unpack structural barriers to true restorative work. Participants will walk away with tools to help cultivate a more inclusive and compassionate campus community.

Queen's Housing & Ancillary Services Team's Approach to Collaboration

Session Type: Round Table Discussion (50 minutes)

Presenter: Kathy Newstead, Parmveer Mundi and Simon Smith (Queen's University)

Target Audience: Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: Learn about the collaborative approach used by Queen's Housing and Ancillary team, balancing students, facility maintenance and year-round revenue-generating opportunities.

Residence Admissions Roundtable

Presenter: Tom Gallini (Queen's University)

Summary- TBA



The Flipped Classroom: Applying Education Theory to Residence Life Training and Development

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Tara Roberts & Chris Eley (McMaster University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: This session will demonstrate research and best practices used to innovate teaching and learning methods for student leaders and student affairs professionals across OACUHO. Participants who attend this session will be able to understand and apply Experiential Instruction and Engagement theories to improve the learner's experience in both the virtual and in-person training environment. Sharing insight on techniques like the flipped classroom approach and numerous assessment strategies to provide insight into student learning throughout the program. Participants will engage with research and work to practically apply their learning through an engaging and collaborative group activity as well as thoughtful self-reflection.

Putting the I in Team - Celebrating Individual Strengths for Stronger Team Morale

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Monica Geary (University of Guelph)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: With varying responsibilities, supporting numerous students and staff, taking time to recognize our own strengths and strengths of others may not always be at front of mind. As we see trends of burnout and imposter syndrome continue to exist within residence life, this brings to light how recognition and celebration of strengths play a significant role impacting individual and team morale. This presentation will highlight the importance of prioritizing recognition initiatives and strengths finders amongst team settings, and how to incorporate varying strategies to build more positive team dynamics.



Learning Experience Block 3: Tuesday, May 27 – 2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

Navigating the Shift: Supervising unionized student staff

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Leah Wales (Queen's University) & Julie Tam (University of Ottawa)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals

Summary: The PSE sector is experiencing an increasing trend in unionization of live-in student staff. Often these student employees are managed by junior residence-life professionals, with limited experience managing people, and who are themselves members of another bargaining unit. Add the complexities of a young, unionized workforce and our unique live-in work environment, and the result is, well, in a word, complicated! This session will explore the nuances of managing unionized student employees, offering practical tips, effective strategies, and best practices to help you navigate this complex dynamic with confidence.

Curiosity Didn't Kill the Cat—It Built a Better Residence Life Team: How Psychological Safety & Strengths-Based Leadership Transforms Housing Communities

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Alake Mills (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals

Summary: Great leaders don't have all the answers—they ask the best questions. Curiosity is the key to building stronger teams, safer spaces, and more engaged communities. This session dives into how psychological safety and strengths-based leadership can transform how we lead, work, and support students. Additionally, we will discuss ways to practice intentionality, active listening, and fostering safe conversations, to support the development of self-awareness, community integration, and EDII in professional and student staff. Using Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship, Schlossberg's Theory of Marginality and Mattering, case studies, and statistics- attendees will gain practical tools to strengthen relationships, empower themselves and their peers by asking meaningful, effective questions, and reflect on how curious leaders will create the most engaged communities.



The Colman Cup: Enhancing Student Involvement in Residence

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Mitchell Prost & Tala Alahdab & Julia Goudreau (University of Toronto – Mississauga)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals

Summary: By attending this session, attendees will learn about the Colman Cup, a community development program from the University of Toronto Mississauga, presented by UTM's Community Development Coordinators. The Colman Cup comprises three committees: the Artist Resource Team, the Equity Outreach Network, and the Gaming, Active and Movement Experiences Committee. Through exploring this program, attendees will gain insights on how community development as a unit within Residence Life functions, what the structure and goals of the Colman Cup are, and how this program encourages both resident and student staff participation in a variety of themed areas.

Safety Without Sirens: Building Peer-to-Peer, After-Hours Student Support Teams

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Elizabeth Ogunrinola (University of Ottawa)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: Universities often face a critical gap in after-hours student support, often relying solely on campus security or dons for conduct, care, and crisis responses. This session highlights uOttawa's Residence Safety Team (RST), a peer-to-peer, crisis, conduct, & care student team that bridges gaps between campus security and residence life staff during overnight hours. The RST was created to reduce reliance on Protection Services while enhancing the capacity of Community Advisors (CAs) and Residence Life & Client Services through de-escalation and peer-led interventions. Participants will assess their after-hours models, explore peer responder impacts, and gain strategies to reduce police involvement and center community care.



From Response to Recovery: Mastering Emergency Preparedness

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Neil Donato (McMaster University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: This session is built to showcase the culminated skills, experience and knowledge of cross-functional housing units to prepare and respond to a crisis in post-secondary housing. Units from facilities, communications, occupancy, finance, and residence life all play an integral role in preparing and responding to elevated emergencies such as floods, fires and everything in between. This session draws content from the province of Ontario's Information Management System (IMS) training for emergency preparedness. The session's goal is to teach essential practices and strategies for all housing officers from across roles for the health and safety of staff and students.

Complex case support in residence: a holistic campus approach

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenters: Jaclyne Mooney & Allan Charbonneau (University of Ottawa)

Target Audience: Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: In this session, we will give an overview of uOttawa Student Support team (case management model) four years after implementation. We will look at how the case management team and the residence life work together to leverage campus resources to take a holistic approach to complex student needs. Our session will look at the importance of relationship-building across campus, training opportunities to increase campus-wide capacity, and how a campus-wide approach to student support begins in residence. We will also explore how each participant can implement some of the collaborative principles from our workshop at their home institutions.



Learning Experience Block 4: Tuesday, May 27 – 3:45 PM – 4:45 PM

How Staff Support Students with Off-Campus Housing

Session Type: Round Table Discussion (50 minutes)

Presenter: Nick Martino & Nicole Sullivan (Trent University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: Students across communities and post-secondary institutions are faced with myriad challenges while living off-campus. As a result, students will seek support through staff working in various off-campus housing roles. These staff often assist students through unique and sometimes complex situations that can extend beyond the scope of their respective roles. The goal of this round table is to facilitate discussions about the experiences, practices, and challenges associated with off-campus housing. By joining this round table, attendees will have a chance to learn from and share experiences with their colleagues, network, and discuss the common housing issues students face.

Roasted By the Fire: Evaluation and Assessment of Residence Education Programming

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Dominique Da Silva & Hagar Ramzy (University of Toronto – Mississauga)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals

Summary: In this workshop, attendees will explore methods for evaluating and assessing residence education programs in Student Housing and Residence Life. By embracing the "roasting" process of feedback, participants will discover how constructive criticism can ignite innovation and enhance current curriculum and educational plans. Through a workshop on examining current practices, participants will gain insights into effective strategies for boosting student engagement and thinking about how we actually use our learning outcomes. The workshop will also provide practical tools and frameworks for implementing assessment plans, ensuring that residence education initiatives are impactful and aligned with institutional goals. Join us to ignite your passion for creating meaningful educational experiences in student housing!



Utilizing Campus Partners to Support Students & Their Success

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Melissa Chaffe (Western University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: The goals of this session are to provide time and space for attendees to explore current relationships with campus partners and the collaborations that are in place to support students, and to identify gaps that may exist in the services/support/resources provided to students and the campus partners that has expertise in that area to collaborate with. There will be discussion about the transition that students go through when exiting residence after first year, and having to utilize campus resources and the supports that Housing professional can provide during that time.

PD For Free- Reading, listening, and watching as development

Session Type: Panel (50 minutes)

Presenter: Becky Shillington (Loyalist College)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: I would like to offer a showcase of books, podcasts, videos, etc. that folks have engaged with over the past year that have impacted their practice in some way. Going beyond "you should read this" to getting into the why- hearing from folks across functional areas and/or experience levels about how they make connections between articles, podcasts, books, etc. to their professional practice, and getting a diverse cross-section of subject areas for folks to draw from. Think of it like elevator pitches for books/podcasts/videos/articles!

Roommate Conflict: Self-Advocacy and Executive Dysfunction Start Pack

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Stuart Craddock (University of Toronto)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: As a primarily first year apartment style residence with 4, 5, and 6 person suites Woodsworth College Residence occasionally requires roommate mediations due to cleaning, guest, or noise expectations. This past year we implemented a three-part agreement with a goal to increase self-awareness, discuss "baseline" and "peak time" expectations, and to emphasize empathy/accountability within the suite. We will share our learning and provide unbranded templates for attendees



Learning Experience Block 5: Wednesday, May 28 – 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Breaking the Iceberg: Gamification for Residence Life Engagement

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Alexandra Lodmal (University of Toronto – Mississauga)
(Julianne Pettigrew Award Winner)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals,

Summary: "Breaking the Iceberg: Gamification for Residence Life Engagement" utilizes a Titanic-themed gamification framework to examine innovative strategies for enhancing student engagement in programming while fostering meaningful connections within student communities. Participants will receive a 1912-era "Titanic Boarding Pass" and embark on an interactive journey, collecting stamps by completing immersive tasks such as lifeboat drills, trivia challenges in the First-Class Lounge, and an iceberg alert escape-room activity. Each activity is meticulously designed to promote teamwork, inclusivity, and problem-solving, providing participants with actionable strategies to build stronger, more connected communities. The session will further explore how anticipating challenges aligns with effective problem-solving in-residence life. It will explore how gamification inspires teamwork and preparedness among staff and students and utilize the Titanic's three-class system as a metaphor for creating inclusive and engaging experiences for diverse groups in residence life.

Dollars and Decisions: Navigating and Developing Budgets in Student Housing Leadership

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Brian Cunha

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: Stepping into leadership roles in student housing often comes with the responsibility of managing large ancillary budgets—but many professionals don't receive formal financial training before they take on these responsibilities. This session is designed as a starting point for housing professionals who aspire to grow their financial literacy and confidence in budget management over time. Rather than making attendees experts in 50 minutes, this session will lay the groundwork by introducing key financial concepts, explaining how ancillary budgets function, and exploring the foundational skills needed to eventually manage multimillion-dollar housing budgets. Through hands-on exercises, real-world scenarios, and discussions with experienced housing professionals, participants will leave with practical next steps to build their financial acumen over time.



Creative Trans* Inclusionary Programs and Practices in Residence Halls

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Gillian McCrudden (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals

Summary: This session focuses on how housing professionals can create residence hall environments that are inclusionary and supportive for trans* students. Drawing on the principles of identity-driven programming and intersectionality, this presentation explores the unique challenges faced by transgender students in residence, and offer solutions to better support this student group. Participants will walk away with a deeper understanding of the trans* residence student experience and practical tools to build safer, more inclusive residence halls where all students, regardless of their gender identity, feel valued and supported.

Food for Thought: A Collaborative Approach between Campus Food Services and Residence Life and Services

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Theresa Couto and Deighton Edwards (Queen's University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: Learn about the collaborative work between Campus Food Services and Residence Life and Services at Queen's University to support students with a range of dietary needs, including but not limited to food allergies and dietary needs related to religious/cultural observances. Delve into the use of technology and food services data as a means of supporting students holistically throughout the year, providing new opportunities to begin conversations of support. Discover innovative ways to support students with religious and cultural observances, engaging with campus partners and students alike to foster a student-centred, inclusive environment.



Aspiring Leaders: Navigating Your Path into Management

Session Type: Panel (50 minutes)

Presenter: Greg Hum (University of Toronto – Scarborough)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: Making the leap from team member to manager is both exciting and challenging. In this session, aspiring leaders will hear from a panel of residence managers who will share their diverse experiences, offering insights into the path toward management and the many ways to lead. We will explore concepts such as communication, building trust, making tough decisions, and driving both individual and organizational success. Whether you're an aspiring manager or seeking to refine your leadership skills, this session will provide thought-provoking ideas, actionable advice, and strategies from those who have successfully navigated the path to leadership.



Learning Experience Block 6: Wednesday, May 28 – 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

The Experiences of Women Senior Housing Officers in Canada

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Jen Coulter (Trent University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: Research suggests that fewer women in student housing have historically risen to senior leadership positions than their male counterparts. While significant research has been conducted in the United States, there is a dearth of Canadian literature relating to women in senior housing officer (SHO) positions. This session will provide an overview of a doctoral study that sought to fill the gap in the Canadian literature by exploring how participating women SHOs at 12 Canadian universities attained their positions and made meaning of their career progression. The findings of the study are intended to be considerations for creating a more inclusive workplace.

A Culture of Sharing: Getting Your Whole Team on the Marketing Bus

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Montana Scott (Trent University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals

Summary: If your organization is anything like ours, Residence Life and Facilities/Operations speak two very different languages. But when an uncertain economic forecast changes enrolment patterns, how do you bring the team together to meet occupancy goals? How do you inspire service-oriented staff to recruit? In this session, Trent's Recruitment & Business Development Coordinator walks you through how Trent makes everyone an ambassador for where they work, challenging the recruiting standard for the 2025-26 season. Even if your department outsources recruiting efforts, this session will help you have better conversations with those teams.

Rideau House: From Inception to Opening

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Laura Storey (Carleton University)

Target Audience: Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: In 2017, Carleton University embarked on a journey to build a 450-bed residence to house first-year and upper-year students. Join in on this presentation to find out the steps Carleton took to achieve the outcome of Rideau House, set to open in September 2025.



Connecting the Dots of Leadership: A Time for all to Lead

Session Type: Workshop (50 minutes)

Presenter: Jen Gonzales & Ann Le (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: There will be four sections participants will go through, with examples from media, stories, and the connected frameworks above:

1. Nurturing a powerful professional network: Over the last 20 years, the state of our profession, and our work has evolved requiring a grounding in the importance of achieving results in an ever changing world. Current generational trends will be reviewed, and the final takeaway message will be the importance of meeting expectations in order to nurture a powerful professional network.
2. The Power of Experience: It is important to build your professional “muscles” over time. Your strengths and weaknesses shape your growth, and effectively communicating them involves self-awareness and a willingness to learn. Whether transitioning roles, leading initiatives, or adapting to new organizations and functional areas, continuous skill development is key to success.
3. Chains in a Link: Understanding the history of your institution, higher education and Student Housing in Canada will provide you with valuable information and help you understand the experiences of those who came before you, how you fit into the story, and where you can make your mark.
4. Lessons from a Lens of Equity: Challenges and setbacks can provide valuable insights, helping you make intentional choices about when to stay, when to leave, and how to prioritize your growth. By embracing discomfort, detaching from limiting identities, and staying committed to your development, you move toward confidence—because ultimately, joy is the goal.

OACUHO Competency Model

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Bianca Taylor (University of Toronto – Mississauga) & Melissa Pratt Morgan (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals, Senior Housing Officers

Summary: TBA



Beyond the Duty: Re-envisioning the Don Experience

Session Type: Lecture (50 minutes)

Presenter: Melanie Howard & Keeley Moloney (Trent University)

Target Audience: New Professionals, Mid-Level Professionals, Advanced Level Professionals

Summary: At Trent University, we are excited to present our 3-year phased approach to eliminate the traditional Don/RA role. In 2022-2023 our Dons were unhappy, experiencing high levels of burnout, stress, and vicarious trauma due to the demanding nature of the role, which lacked sufficient support and work-life balance. This feedback prompted us to reimagine the Don position to better prioritize mental wellness and create a more sustainable, supportive model for both Dons and the students they serve. This session will explore our model's impact through data and anecdotal insights highlighting improvements in staff well-being, community engagement, and academic success, while offering practical takeaways for other institutions seeking to better support their student staff.
