I. Purpose

The general purpose of the Resident Advisor in the Governor’s School program is to facilitate the positive learning experience of the students participating in the program. We want the students to have fun working hard at theater. This goal includes a variety of responsibilities.

II. Resident Advisor’s Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the Resident Advisor are listed below. Additional responsibilities may be defined in the process of executing particular aspects of the program at specific times. The general responsibilities of the Resident Advisor are:

1) To actively support the goals and purpose of the Governor’s School Program and facilitate the engagement of all students in that purpose.

2) To attend and actively participate in all scheduled meetings, training, field trips, and events of the Governor School Program.

3) To assist the program’s faculty, staff, and administrator/s in all aspects of the execution and improvement of the Governor School Program. This may at times include assisting in the classroom.

4) To maintain the security and cleanliness of all school facilities and property, including student rooms during and at the completion of the program.

5) To maintain a proper relationship with all Governor’s School Students and uphold the general expectations the program has for each student. Under no circumstance should a Governor’s School R.A. interact in a flirtatious or romantic way with any of the student participants in the program.

6) To maintain an open, appropriate, and well-meaning line of communication with all other faculty, staff, and administrators of the program and deal with problems and conflicts directly, honestly, and in an effort toward resolution.

7) To maintain appropriate supervision over all Governor’s School students throughout the duration of the program and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to student needs, problems, safety, or security concerns.

8) To assist in the check-in process for Governor School students on the opening day of program and check out all students at the end of the program, assuring the cleanliness of the residence facility and the security of any and all school/program property.

9) To refrain from any activities prohibited of Governor’s School students while in their presence. Alcohol is to be consumed off campus and smoking should occur out of the sight/awareness of the Governor’s School students.

III. The Resident Advisor’s relationship to the Governor’s School Student

The most fundamental of the R.A.’s responsibilities is maintaining the basic relationship between the RA’s and the students. The R.A. should strive to maintain a positive equitable relationship with each of the students in the program while maintaining the necessary authority required to fulfill his or her responsibilities to facilitate all students’ safety and success.
Most of the students who participate in this program will pursue and take responsibility for their own success in the program socially, artistically and academically. Some students may need encouragement to put forward a little extra effort in one of those areas. Other students may just need someone to help facilitate their initial experience in one of those areas. In any event, the entire staff of the Governor’s School is responsible first and foremost to help make the students’ experience as meaningful and fulfilling as possible in the work and social experiences we provide as a part of the program. All of the rules, responsibilities, expectations and considerations of our work bend to that end. You should try to advance any opportunity you have to make a student’s experience better. Some times that will involve gentle nudging to get students to work harder and achieve more. Other times it will involve a sympathetic ear listening to their problems or an ‘appeal’ for inclusion of one student or another. Looking out for the little things we can do to enrich each student’s experience is the most important and most difficult part of our jobs.

The best thing you can do for the students generally is to give them attention. On their program evaluations, students repeatedly expressed how much it meant to them that the R.A.’s participated and interacted with them- especially during the students’ free-time in the evening. While you definitely need to make time and space for yourself to manage your own personal needs and responsibilities, give the time you spend with the students over to them. If an R.A. always has one ear to his or her phone in a conversation with a significant other, we probably aren’t sending the right messages to the students.

Authority is not something asserted over people. It is the charge of responsibility for a group of individuals who willingly submit to authority out of trust. If you damage that trust, your authority will diminish. Most of what damages the trust of authority is the perception on the part of the group that the authority figure places his or her own self-interest ahead of the group’s. This can take the form of ignoring responsibility, inconsistent application of authority, discriminatory treatment of different members of the group (positive or negative), or inconsistent behavior with other figures of authority.

Any relationship with a student that becomes exclusive to other students is inherently damaging to the functioning and morale of the program as well as to that individual student’s experience of the program. Favoritism and/or romantic relationships with students are extreme examples of such dysfunction and are therefore unacceptable. As an R.A., you should work hard to maintain an equitable and consistent relationship with each of the students you advise. As a group, the R.A. staff should maintain a similar consistency in your treatment of students.

Not everyone understands the messages we send out in the same way. When you work in an authoritative capacity is it critical to consider the many different ways the things you say and do may be received by students. For example, you may be a very ‘touchy’ person who expresses affection openly to many different kinds of people with very plutonic intentions. A young high school student, however, may read those expressions as something quite different. You may put your arm around friends all the time, but a student may receive that action as a romantic gesture. Conversely, you may be able to be sarcastic around peers who know you like to ‘kid,’ but a student may take something you say as a criticism or distain. It’s always best to assume you will be misunderstood and make every effort to send clear messages to those with whom you are communicating.

If you have concerns about a staff member, it is your responsibility to speak with that staff member regarding your concerns or to bring them to a supervisor you feel can deal with them more appropriately. It is very damaging to the function of the group dynamic as well as the R.A. staff’s credibility to speak with students about staff, faculty, or administrative concerns. This damages the basic trust upon which the program functions.

The Governor’s School students are generally quite high functioning individuals. They need very little in the way of discipline, policy enforcement, etc. The most important role the R.A. staff provides is the fair, consistent maintaining of the program’s expectations and their presence throughout the program. If you are there and you are consistent and fair in your expectations, the program will practically run itself.
IV. General Expectations of Governor’s School Students

The expectations outlined below are intended to provide a safe, secure, and structured social and academic program for student engagement. It is the general responsibility of all faculty, staff and administrators to help to maintain these standards with all of the Governor’s School students.

- Students are responsible for maintaining the order, security and cleanliness of their person, belongings and room for the duration of the Governor's School Program. Students should shower daily and keep all areas of the residence hall clean from food and garbage.
- Students are not to be in rooms during class time or scheduled activities.
- A consistent time should be agreed upon by the R.A.’s and the Program Director at which students should be expected to be in their rooms. Another time should be established for lights out.
- All student socializing should happen in common areas, not in student’s rooms. Students should be strongly encouraged to socialize with the other members of the Governor’s school program, instead of students involved with other programs on campus. This helps build the dynamic of the group and, in that, the program.
- Students may not leave campus without the direct permission of the program director. Any student who leaves campus must sign out and in with a member of the R.A. staff.
- Students may only have visitors (non parental) with the explicit permission of the program director.
- All students are expected to be respectful of all persons, facilities, and equipment.
- Cell phones are only permitted in student’s residence hall rooms. They are not permitted in the common areas of the residence hall, in the academic classrooms or laboratories, or on field trips.

V. Dealing with Problems

A. Conflict Resolution

All human behavior is centered around the fundamental dynamic of power. People give, take, assert, and loose power regularly through their interactions with each other. Consider how you behave if you are trying to impress someone vs. how you behave if you are trying to get your money back from an unsatisfactory business transaction. The most important element in resolving conflict is to keep ‘plays’ on power out of the picture as much as possible. Being calm, equitable, and fair minded will maintain your authority and allow the conflicts between students or staff to be resolved in an educational and functional way. Keep your focus on resolving the problem, not on winning/losing or the drama of the situation. Try to diffuse conflict where possible instead of adding to it. When in doubt, ask; don’t assume. If you feel disrespected, be honest with the individual who has caused the feeling without trying to provoke or reprimand him or her. Often these are simple misunderstandings that the individuals involved make into much more than that, unnecessarily.

Here are a few tips for helping individuals (or yourself) resolve conflict:

- Always isolate the individuals involved from bystanders (nosy people).
- Allow all sides to be aired without interruption and treat all sides the same.
- Ask all individuals to speak from their own perspective, not an omniscient one (I statements- I felt, I thought, etc.).
- Try to understand the perceptions of each side and don’t take sides (assuming you are not a part of the conflict).
After airing both sides, steer the conversation toward resolution and away from the problem itself. Try to find a resolution that is mutually agreeable and encourage all sides to drop the issue once a resolution is agreed upon.

B. Student Problems/Counseling

As previously stated most of the Governor School students are pretty high functioning and will get along just fine. However, as R.A.s, you always want to be on the lookout for a student in need of some help. The fundamental problem to keep an eye out for is individuals who constantly try to disassociate themselves from the group or program. Generally speaking, our responsibility is to do everything we can to facilitate students engaging in the program. When students don’t engage in the program or with the other students it is not only harmful to them and the group it can often be a sign of a much more significant problem.

Keep an eye out for gathering signs of the following:

- Students consistently not sleeping or eating
- Students sleeping far too much
- Students consistently not participating in group/program activities
- Students with consistent maladies or illness
- Students giving things away.
- Students making verbal threats toward themselves or others (even in a joking manner).
- Students who consistently use the bathroom alone immediately following meals
- Students with inordinate and accumulating cuts or scars on their body.
- Any dramatic change in behavior in a student

Some of these behaviors are obviously a normal part of life for most human beings on occasion. However, any student that regularly exhibits abnormal behavior should be brought to the attention of the resident director or program director. Any students threatening themselves or others should immediately be brought to the attention of the faculty or administrative staff.

Sometimes students just need an ear to talk to. If a student seems a little down, angry, etc., you may be able to help just by listening. The best help is that which allows and encourages the student to solve his or her own problems instead of advising the student on how to solve them.

Here are some tips to that end:

- Generally strive to keep pathways of communication open between yourself and the students
- Be specific, direct, and honest when approaching a student. Don’t just say “You okay?” Give the student some signs of sincerity and interest—“I noticed that you sat by yourself at lunch and you seem pretty angry today. Did something happen?”
- Ask open ended questions which allow the student to open up, not questions which the students can dismiss with yes or no answers.
- Don’t tell the student what to do, ask them questions which might help them to figure out what to do for themselves.
- Try to keep students engaged and included in activities. Most teen-agers like to complain and test boundaries. That is fine. The important thing is that they are not dropping out and isolating themselves from the group on a regular basis.
Don’t betray a student’s confidence to other students or staff members. HOWEVER, never promise a student confidentiality for a problem that may put anyone at risk. It is your obligation to tell the resident director or program director of any potential for harm that may come about.

When a problem is serious and beyond a simple chat with a student, be sure to notify the resident director or program director as soon as possible. Know your limitations.

C. First Aid and Emergencies

As a Resident Advisor, you may find yourself in the position of first responder to an emergency. You need to be prepared to deal with the emergency itself, those students that may be involved, as well as those students who are not involved in the situation. Your primary responsibility in an emergency situation is to maintain or establish control over the situation and provide for the safety and security of those involved. Since an emergency, by definition, is generally a situation that requires specialized, qualified attention, you should not attempt to deal directly with the problem unless you have the requisite qualifications.

Your responsibilities are:

- To alert and assist appropriate professionals to deal with the situation. The primary contact for any and all emergencies is campus police at 328-2677 (328-COPS) or 911.
- To inform the proper authorities and appropriate professionals of any and all information relevant to the situation.
- To know who, on the staff, faculty, and administration, is familiar with procedures for First Aid.
- To immediately inform the Program Director and Resident Director of any emergency that arises.
- To be respectful of student privacy. When possible, isolate those students involved in a potentially embarrassing situation from onlookers either by removing those involved or removing the onlookers. Additionally, you should only discuss private situations with the individuals responsible who need to know or those directly involved. Do not give out personal information except to appropriate staff, faculty, administrators or the proper authorities.
- To maintain (on your person) necessary contact information between yourselves and for emergency response—numbers for the program director, resident director, and campus police.
# Thompson Hall Room Assignments

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