

ing: The university challenge of the 1990s. *Change*, 26 (4), 23-29.

Guskin, A. E. (1996) Facing the future: The change process for restructuring universities. *Change*, 28 (4), 26-37.

Nicklin, J. L. (1996, November 1). Five Boston colleges join forces to seek economies of scale. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. A37-39.

Ian Crone plans to graduate from the Higher Education Student Affairs program at Indiana University, Bloomington in May 1999. He received a B.A. in English/Secondary Education from Valparaiso University, where he was active in the Valparaiso Union Board and helped guide renovation of the Valparaiso Union. At IUB, Ian has served as program advisor for the Indiana Memorial Union Board.

A Study of the Effects of Academic Community Floors

Amanda Denton, Jennifer Forbes, Danny King, Claibourne Patty

Student affairs professionals have designed residential programs to enhance students' learning. One program is the academic community floor. This study examines the impact of the academic community floor on student perception of the effect the floor environment has on academic achievement. The study found that students living on the academic community floors generally had higher predicted GPAs and were more satisfied with the floor environment as it related to academics.

Introduction and Literature Review

In response to the changing role of student affairs professionals, residential facilities have set new goals for enhancing student development. Residential staff hypothesize that by establishing a productive social climate, a sense of community will develop within living areas (Blimling & Schuh, 1981). Buckner (1977) viewed residence halls as the ultimate resource for creating a comprehensive educational experience. The basic premise is that integrating education into the living environment will promote student achievement and feelings of overall satisfaction with the campus. These were some of the ideas that spawned the creation of academic residence halls. Residence life can play an important role in supporting the academic mission of the university. Because students spend a great deal of time in their residence halls, they are ideal places to develop programming that supports academic achievement (Blimling, 1993).

This study looks at the academic community floors in the residence halls at a large Research I public university in the Midwest. These academic community floors are designed and marketed as floors for students who are committed to the academic experience. The students are expected to, as a floor unit, decide how and when to create study hours and to extend quiet hours. The resident assistants for these floors may also serve to create an academic environment by enforcing quiet and study hours and by creating programming to enhance the academic experience, such as tutoring or study tables.

Past studies have concluded that residence halls contribute to students' overall campus experience and enhance college persistence when compared to students who live off-campus or commute from their parents' homes (Astin, 1975). It is critical that student affairs professionals investigate and acknowledge the potential that academic community floors could add to residential living. This study proposes to investigate whether or not these academic community floors enhance student satisfaction with their residence hall environment. By surveying students, the researchers hope to assess the climate of the floor and to determine if the students perceive the environment to be conducive to learning.

Literature Review

Nowack and Hanson (1985) examined 1,302 first-year residence hall students and 740 non-residence hall students. Academic achievement was mea-

sured by calculating the mean grade point average (GPA). Academic difficulty was defined as the mean number of students placed on academic probation any-time during the school year studied in the project. By comparing GPAs at the end of the study, Nowack and Hanson found that residence hall students obtained a higher grade point average than non-residence hall students. However, when including the individual variables high school GPA and SAT scores, it was found that residence hall students showed a slight increase in their GPAs over the non-residence halls students. The number of students experiencing academic difficulty was much greater among students living off-campus (Nowack & Hanson).

Astin (1993) found that the most value from the residential experience comes from peer interaction. He asserted that universities have yet to take advantage of the possibility of residence halls and that they need to do more to increase their involvement in students' academic careers inside the residence halls (Astin).

Peer interaction is a key aspect to the benefits of the residence halls. The effect of the residents' collective personalities is vital to sustaining the community. Another perspective is that the personalities of a group of people determine the type of the environment in which they exist. Holland (1973) said, "the pairing of persons and environments leads to outcomes that we can predict and understand from our knowledge of the personality types and environmental models" (p. 2). For the purposes of this study, these outcomes might include a person's social behavior, educational choice and achievement, and sensitivity to influence. For these reasons, a student may be inclined to choose to live in an academic unit.

Buckner (1977) considered residence halls to be highly under-used learning laboratories. He proposed the restructuring of residence hall staff and the development of educational programs to stimulate personal and intellectual growth. This project resulted in numerous residential programs, including faculty-led discussions, academic advising and career workshops, voter education programs, leadership and assertiveness training, health clinics and tutoring. After the third semester of the program's activation, a questionnaire was completed regarding student satisfaction with residence life. Level of satisfaction averaged 3.5 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most satisfied and 1 being least satisfied. The results of this study suggest a positive outcome of educational programming within residence halls (Buckner).

Students who like to take advantage of tutoring programs, quiet hours, and study groups are reinforced in learning communities. Students are likely to feel supported and content in environments that resemble their personality pattern. "The more congruent a person's environment is with his personality pattern, the more likely he will exhibit the social and avocational behaviors hypothesized from his personality pattern. In contrast, the more incongruent his environment, the greater the likelihood that the person will not participate or exhibit these behaviors" (Holland, 1973, p.44). Based on Holland's findings we hypothesize that students living on academic community floors will have higher grades and higher levels of satisfaction with the academic environment of their floor than students living on non-academic community floors. We also hypothesize

that students will pick a residence hall and want certain rules based on the students' personality types.

Method

Sample

This study was conducted at a large, public Research I institution in the Midwest with a large residential population. The majority of residence centers have academic community floors. These academic community floors offer extended quiet hours, study times and some additional programming for their residents. Students self-select for the academic community floors. For this study, we focused on two centers. The sample for this study was eight floors in the two centers — two female academic community floors, two male academic community floors, two female non-academic community floors, and two male non-academic community floors.

These centers were selected because they have a higher retention rate than other centers on the campus. The higher retention rate indicated that we would find a mix of students from different classes. Having upperclass students in the study allowed a comparison between the academic community floor and previous living arrangements. Women's and men's floors were chosen to see if gender made a difference in the students' perceptions of the floor environment based on Nowack and Hanson's (1985) findings that residential settings can have different impacts on men and women. For the comparison group of non-academic community floors, floors were chosen in the same residence center and usually the same wing so the experiences of the students would be similar in as many ways possible with the exception of the variable being studied — living on an academic community floor.

The number of students surveyed was 148. The response rate was 39.8% with 80 (54.1%) females and 68 (45.9%) males. The academic community floors had a response rate of 40.6%. The non-academic community floors had a response rate of 38.9%. The class breakdown was 50% first year students, 40.5% sophomores, 6.8% juniors, and 2.7% seniors. The racial/ethnic mix was 1.4% African-American, 8.8% Asian-American, 83.8% Caucasian, 2.7% Latino/Latina, and 1.4% Native American.

Procedure

A survey was created to measure the students' perceptions of the floor environment, using a Likert-type scale for most questions and some open-ended questions for additional student input. The survey looked at specific topics including programming, academic achievement, peer interaction, involvement, rules and regulations, and choice of hall. Programming was included because Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling (1996) suggested that residential programming could be designed to promote academic development. The peer group and involvement was examined because Astin (1993) said that the peer group has the greatest impact on students and the involvement of students determines how much an experience will impact the students. Residence hall and rules and regulations

were included as Holland (1973) hypothesized that a student will pick a hall and want certain rules based on the student's personality type.

The surveys were distributed to students at a floor meeting called by the floor's resident assistant. Two members of the research team distributed the survey. Students returned the surveys to the researchers during the meeting. This procedure was the same for academic community floors and non-academic community floors.

Analysis

The data were analyzed to compute the mean, median and standard deviation and to look for differences in the responses of students on academic community floors from the students on the non-academic community floors for all questions. Statistical analyses were done on the survey results to determine significance. Z-tests were used to compare the means of the responses from the academic community floors and the non-academic community floors. T-tests were used to analyze the data for differences in the responses based on class standing and gender both within the academic community floors and between the academic community floors and non-academic community floors.

Limitations

This study has a few limitations that are important to recognize. First, the response rate was low. Since only students who came to the floor meeting participated in the survey, the response may have been more positive than that of the floor in general. Secondly, the students were in a group setting while answering the survey so there might have been some discussion among the students about how to respond. Thirdly, for some of our questions, there was a high level of variance in the answers. Since the reliability of the survey instrument was not able to be tested, it is unknown if these questions are unreliable or if there is a lot of variance among students. Finally, because the academic community floors are unique to this university, it would be difficult to generalize these results to other universities.

Results

The findings can be divided into four sections: reasons students chose to live on academic community floors; aspects of the academic community floors that promote academic achievement; aspects of the academic community floors that are not distinct from non-academic community floors; and the overall GPA differences among academic and non-academic community floors. Overall, there is an indication that students living on academic community floors exhibit higher academic success and dedication to academics than students on non-academic community floors. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Rationale for Living on Academic Community Floors

When asked to cite reasons that they chose to live on their floors, academic community floor residents agreed, on average, that their floor encourages academic achievement, whereas the agreement among non-academic community

floor residents was not as consistent (means: 3.09 v. 2.56). This sentiment was echoed in the open-ended responses. When academic community floor residents were asked why they chose to live in their area, 25.7% wanted to live on an academic community floor; 21.4% lived on the floor the previous year (and indicated by their return, they presumably had a positive experience); 17.1% expected roommates to be motivated, studious, or have other academic-related attributes; and 11.4% expected the floor to be quiet. Residents of the non-academic community floors, however, cited the following reasons for living on their floors: placed there by room assignments (47.6%), location of the center (19%), friends lived on the floor (11.1%), they wanted to live in that specific residence center (11.1%), and they lived on the floor the previous year (9.5%).

Aspects that Promote Academic Achievement

The following areas demonstrate the dedication among students on academic community floors, including study habits and floor environment. Socializing is also discussed with the floor environment, but it is used to demonstrate a key difference between the academic and non-academic community floors.

Amount of Time Spent Studying, Studying Alone, and Helping Others with Assignments.

The amount of time spent studying is identified as being higher on the academic community floors (means: 8.3 v. 7.59). The average time spent studying per week on the academic community floor is over eight hours per week, whereas non-academic community residents study, on average, seven hours per week. Although the significance may be small in the short run, the amount of time dedicated to studying accumulates over the course of the semester. The variance among the academic community residents, however, is larger than that of the non-academic community residents, indicating a more diverse amount of time devoted to studying.

More academic community residents identified studying alone as a frequent activity on their floor, whereas non-academic community residents did not study alone as much (means: 3.97 v. 3.64). Additionally, the variance among academic residents was lower than that of non-academic residents (0.59 v. 0.97), indicating a greater consistency of time allotted for studying alone among academic community residents. However, when asked about how the floor academic environment could be improved, twice as many academic community floor residents as non-academic community floor residents indicated that study groups would be useful.

Academic community residents were more inclined to view helping others as promoting academic achievement, identifying this area as one that is a recognizable benefit of living on an academic community floor (means: 2.86 v. 2.69).

Floor Environment and Socializing

On average, residents of the academic community floors more strongly identified the floor environment as supportive of academic achievement (means: 3.11 v. 2.81). This supports the contention that academic community floors will

promote academic achievement more than non-academic community floors.

Socializing was the one area of the survey in which non-academic community floors had a higher mean than the academic community floors (means: 4.13 v. 3.86). In other words, non-academic community residents engaged in socializing more frequently than academic community residents.

The idea that the academic community floors support academic achievement in general is also supported by answers to an open-ended question, which cited supportive aspects of the environment. The top four responses by academic community residents were the lack of noise on the floor (52.9%); residents helping each other (20%); residents work/study hard (15.7%); and residents respect each other (11.4%). Comparable responses from non-academic community residents occurred with the following frequency: the floor is quiet (30.8%); residents are respectful/considerate (13.8%); residents study a lot (10.8%); and students are helpful/help each other (7.7%).

Indistinct Aspects of Academic Community Floors

The residents surveyed also revealed that many aspects of the academic community floor environment either did not support academic achievement or were not advantageous compared to the non-academic community floors. Intentional efforts at programming on academic community floors were not perceived by the students to affect their floor environment. In addition to programming, the support of a resident assistant on the academic community floors was not recognized as promoting academic achievement, with approximately half of the residents agreeing that the RA promotes academic achievement and the other half disagreeing.

The perceptions among the academic and non-academic community floors regarding the enforcement of quiet hours were not significantly different ($p > .10$) and the means were very similar (2.75 v. 2.64). In other words, residents on both types of floors tended to agree that enforcement of quiet hours promotes academic achievement. In the open-ended questions, many academic community floor residents listed more effective enforcement of quiet hours as a way to improve the floor's academic environment.

Another assumption regarding the academic community floors was that they would give students the opportunity to help each other and receive help with academic problems. Although on average, academic community residents agreed that receiving help enhanced the academic environment, non-academic community residents also agreed that receiving help benefited their academic achievement (means: 2.71 v. 2.67). Although respondents from both groups benefited from receiving help, residents of academic and non-academic community floors indicated that they rarely participate in study groups in their living units (means: 1.8 v. 1.83) or studied with floormates (means: 2.3 v. 2.25).

Grade Point Averages

The residents of academic community floors had higher high school GPAs than non-academic community floor residents. The actual difference was approximately a third of a grade (e.g. an A- versus a B+). Similar to the high

school GPAs, the predicted semester GPAs on academic community floors tended to be a third of a grade higher than those on non-academic community floor (e.g. a B+ versus a B). Assuming that assigned grades are one way of demonstrating academic dedication, this indicates that academic community floor residents are more academically motivated.

The mean difference between high school GPA and the predicted GPA for the fall 1997 semester was lower on the academic community floors (means: .82 v. 1.21). This indicates that, on average, residents on academic community floors maintained a more consistent GPA from high school to college. On non-academic community floors, there tended to be a greater drop from high school GPA to current semester GPA. Additionally, there is a lower variance for the mean on the academic community floors, indicating the range among grade variations was smaller and the grades attained were more consistent than non-academic residents.

Discussion

Ultimately, the study indicated the tendency of students to seek out an environment congruent with their needs. Students who are more focused on studying may be more likely to select an academic community floor than other students. This could account for the personality traits of the students living on the academic community floors and their seriousness about their studies. Holland's theory would suggest that one would find these types of students on academic community floors. Holland suggested that people with a certain personality would tend to seek out an environment that is congruent with their personality (Walsh, 1978).

When asked in the survey why they wanted to live on an academic community floor, the responses focused on academics and accounted for a majority of the students who answered this question. On the non-academic community floors, however, none of the respondents gave an academically related reason for living on the floor. This implies that the students who are living on the academic community floors are more academically focused than the non-academic community floor students. The academic community floor students are seeking out an environment that is comfortable for them: supportive, quiet and conducive to studying. They have found such an environment on the academic community floor.

A comparison of the GPAs among the floors also provides a means of analysis. It was found in this study that the mean GPA of the students on the academic community floors was about one third of a letter grade higher than those students who lived on non-academic community floors (B+ for academic community floors as compared to B for the non-academic community floors). Also, when comparing the variables for GPA difference, one can see a distinct difference. One finds that the drop in GPA from high school to college is less for a student living on an academic community floor than for a student living on a non-academic community floor. The students on the academic community floors also had a high school GPA that was approximately a third of a letter grade

higher than non-academic community floor students. This supports Astin's IEO model, in the sense that the inputs (I), or students' experiences prior to college, can affect their experiences in college (Astin, 1993). In other words, students who were academically successful in high school may be predisposed to choose an academic community floor. This also reflects Holland's (1973) theory regarding person-environment congruence; i.e. students who are academically inclined will seek out environments that encourage academic achievement.

While similar numbers of students on academic and non-academic community floors claimed to receive help, many more people on academic community floors said that they had given help to others during the semester. Additionally, a more significant percentage of students on academic community floors identified their interaction with peers on the floor as helping them in their academic achievement. One student stated, "in general, the environment is good. Not only for studying, but for having intelligent conversations." Astin (1993) reported student to student interaction had substantial positive correlation with Overall Academic Development. The positive intellectual interaction occurring on floors can have a direct impact on students' academic development (Astin). In response to the question "How can the floor environment be improved?", twice as many students on the academic community floors answered this question with requests for study groups on the floor than did students on the non-academic community floors. This highlights the academic mindset of the academic community floor residents.

Since the environment on academic community floors is expected to be more conducive to academic pursuits, one would expect that quiet hours would be enforced more strictly. In actuality, students on these floors reported no real difference in quiet hour enforcement. In fact, several students on the academic community floors suggested that one way to improve the floor environment was to enforce quiet hours more effectively. This deviation from the theory can be explained by the academic community floor students' desire for a quieter living environment. These students may be wishing that quiet hours were enforced more, even though the overall environment on the academic community floor is considerably quieter than the environment of a non-academic community floor.

Implications

A few key areas are still in need of further research to completely understand the impact and effectiveness of the academic community floor environment on students' academic achievement. One of these areas is programming. It is necessary to examine the types of programs being presented on the floor and program attendance. Research should focus on how programs are developed on these floors and how these sorts of programs are meeting the needs of the students.

Another area of research for the academic community floor is the role of the Resident Assistant in the academic development of the students on the floor. The research should look at the qualities of successful RAs on the academic community floors and how those qualities affect the community and academic envi-

ronment of the floor.

One final area of further research is that of retention on the academic community floor. It would seem that if students' needs are better met on an academic community floor, the academic community floors would have greater retention rates. The research should focus on retention figures on the academic community floors and how they compare with the non-academic community floors and should determine the major reasons why students stay on the floors and why they might leave.

No research was found that assessed academic communities in residence halls. Extensive research was found regarding Living Learning Centers (LLCs) and their benefits to an academic environment. This study shows that substantial benefits can arise from implementing the much simpler academic community floors. LLCs require a great deal of capital and institutional supports that may not be available to all institutions. The academic community floors are programs that residence life departments could establish in order to better serve students.

This study has concluded that the academic community floor students tended to have a slightly higher grade point average than the non-academic community floor students. This study does not imply, however, that the academic community floor environment would produce these same results for every individual that might live there. Holland's (1973) theory states that congruence between the person's personality type and the environment's type should exist. If this match between personality and environment is not made, then the effects may not occur either. However, there is enough evidence of increased satisfaction with the academic environment on the academic community floors to warrant further investigation into their effectiveness.

Table 1: Results of Survey

Survey Question	Acad. Floor Mean	Non-Acad. Floor Mean	p value
Time spent studying	8.3	7.59	p<.03
Time spent studying alone	3.97	3.64	p<.01
Helping others promotes academic achievement	2.86	2.69	p<.05
The floor supports academic achievement	3.11	2.81	p<.0001
How often do you socialize?	3.86	4.13	p<.02
Programs benefits academic achievement	2.39	2.23	p<.25
RA promotes academic achievement	2.56	2.54	p<.45
Enforcement of quiet hours aids academic achievement	2.75	2.64	p<.19
Receiving study help benefited academic achievement	2.71	2.67	p<.27
How often do you participate in study groups?	1.8	1.83	p<.43
How often do you study with floormates?	2.3	2.25	p<.29
GPA difference (high school GPA - predicted college GPA)	.81	1.23	p<.05

References

- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blimling, G. S. (1993). The influence of college residence halls on students. In J. S. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*. (Vol. 9, pp. 248-307). New York: Agathon.
- Blimling, G., & Schuh, J. (1981). Increasing the educational role of residence, *New Directions for Student Services*. #13. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Buckner, D. R. (1977). Restructuring residence hall programming: Residence hall educators with a curriculum. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 18, 389-392.
- Holland, J. (1973). *Making vocational choices: A theory of careers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Nowack, K. M. & Hanson, A. J. (1985). Academic achievement of freshmen as a function of residence hall housing. *National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Journal*, 22 (3), 22-28.
- Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella E. T., and Blimling, G.S. (1996). Students' out-of-class experiences and their influence on learning and cognitive development: A literature review. *Journal of College Student Development* 37, 149-162.
- Walsh, W. B. (1978). Person/Environment interaction. In G. D. Kuh, J. P. Bean, D. Hossler and F. K. Stage (Eds.). *ASHE Reader on College Students*. Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.
- Amanda Denton graduated from Ball State University with a B.A. in 1996. She then went on to attend Indiana University where she received an M.S. in Higher Education and Student Affairs in 1998. While pursuing her coursework she worked as a client counselor at the Office of Student Financial Assistance.*
- Jennifer Forbes graduated from Indiana University with a Masters in Higher Education and Student Affairs in May 1998. While at IU, she served as an academic advisor with the Honors Division. She graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a B.S. in Biological Science in 1994.*
- Danny King will receive his Masters degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University in May 1999. He is currently an Assistant Hall Manager with Housing and Food Services at Purdue University.*
- Claibourne Patty graduated from Indiana University in 1998 with an M.S. in Higher Education and Student Affairs. While at IU, he was an Assistant Coordinator at Ashton Residence Center. He graduated from Grinnell College in 1994 with a B.A. in Political Science.*

Assessment of Student-Athlete Involvement in a University Residence Hall

Heather Diaz, Bob Gonyea, Darin L. Junck, Emily Ward

The purpose of this study is to investigate the involvement of student-athletes in residence hall communities. Survey results were collected from nine floors of a residence hall center at a large public Midwestern research university. Several significant findings are reported which indicate that student-athletes are not as involved in the life of the residence hall community as non-athletes. Implications of the findings suggest that there may be an opportunity for student affairs professionals to involve student-athletes in the residence halls through increased peer educator programming and through a special emphasis on resident-RA relationships on floors with student-athletes.

Introduction

An institution may not provide an on-campus or off-campus housing benefit for student-athletes that is not available on the same basis to the general student body. (NCAA Proposal No. 30 as quoted by Sperber, 1990, p. 256)

In January 1991, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) passed Proposal No. 30 on Athletics Housing which phased out the "athletic dorm" as of 1996. One rationale for abolishing the athletic residence hall was to provide student-athletes with a more traditional college experience. The student-athlete population had been isolated from mainstream campus life in the past in order to maintain a more controlled environment, which could cater to their unique needs. In doing so, however, they had not been afforded the benefits of interacting with the general residence hall population.

Now, as a result of the NCAA ruling, coaches like Georgia Tech's Bobby Ross, are saying that athletes, by living in the residence halls with non-athletic students, "relate better to the student body...and the students get to know [the athlete] as more than a number" (Wolff, 1991, p.53). However, Engstrom & Sedlacek (1991) suggest that athletes be considered a part of their own culture with problems unique to their situation.

The student-athlete population appears to be, as a whole, a strongly supported group within the college environment. Student-athletes have a predetermined social group, their teammates or other athletes, within the residence hall. Student-athletes spend much of their time attending classes with other student-athletes and participating in athletic-related activities. Such a situation creates college experiences that are unique to student-athletes (Sowa & Gressard, 1983). Holland (1973) suggests that people with like interests and behaviors will tend to gravitate toward one another; and that people will search for an environment which is consistent with their values.

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether student-athletes who lived in the residence halls of a large, public, Midwestern research university