

A Common Goal: Serving Students

Within Housing Departments, we work together. "We" being sets of teams that collaborate to better serve students. Residence Life administrators are generally ice breaking, team building, conflict managing, problem solvers. We believe in teamwork. We decided that we had something to share. "We" being Barney, Steve, and me. With the idea of teamwork in mind, I feel that our team has something to share, something that could be called a "Best Practice."

I currently serve the University of Oregon's students through the Department of Housing as a Complex Director for 600 international, Greek, transfer, and first year athletic scholarship students and 21 student staff members. Barney is campus heat and refrigeration mechanic or trade maintenance worker and our complex's handy "fix-it" person. Steve, serves as the custodial coordinator for our area, supervising 10 custodial staff members. Needless to say, I'm sure it is easy to see how we should work together. It is how we do just this that we feel it is important to share.

Facilities/Maintenance, Custodial, and Residence Life could not survive without the other. We all serve students. Most importantly, we all have to love our students to do the work we do everyday. I state everyday that I could not do my job without this amazing team. So, we found a few moments of time to sit down and decipher what we have that works. This doesn't imply that no one else has this, but should be received as an example of something that really seems to work for all the players involved.

When mapping our "teamwork" out, we realized that we all love our jobs. We also respect each other's jobs and understand

the parameters set by our individual positions within the Complex and Housing as a whole. We also work for ourselves, which seems to be some pretty high standards! Most importantly, we work towards a common goal—serving students so they are comfortable, happy, have a healthy study environment, and a safe place to make and learn from mistakes. Our dedication is not only to the students in the complex, but to each other. Mutual respect, open lines of frequent communication, and a great sense of camaraderie keep our team together. We respect each other's work loads, priorities, and administrative processes. Moreover, we follow through with each other, taking no request lightly or as a trivial desire. We give each other progress reports and talk daily. Our daily communication ranges from focusing on an emergency situation to light hearted humor. Dealing with heat shut offs, fire alarms, vandalism, disrespect, sexual harassment, and biohazard clean up is still a fun and rewarding experience with our team—we all work together toward what is best for each other and the students.

When asked to specifically state what it is that I "need" them for, I stated that student's don't always change their behavior when the mechanic comes in to fix the heat or a custodial worker enters to change a light bulb. They see "real" actions of the students. I rely on their observations for behavioral trends, eating disorders, drug use, major behavioral changes such as depression, and signs of aggression or disrespect. I in turn asked Barney and Steve that same question. They responded very quickly to my needs. They need me to react to the problem. Regardless of how busy I may be, they said that they bring something to my attention and it changes. I feel that my relationship with my student staff help facilitate this far more than I do. Regardless, we do what is requested, give a realistic timeline or expected deadline, and follow through with one another. Steve stated, "that we each know who to go to for a specific job, we clearly explain what we need, and we leave knowing it will be dealt with or is immediately given timeline and expected deadlines." "Nothing is taken as or seems trivial," explained Barney.

I truly believe that the work environment I have here in my complex is extraordinary and worth sharing. I hope you are reading this and saying, we do this, we do that. However, if you aren't saying this—put the *Talking Stick* down and go and really talk with your team. I say everyday and I will continue saying that I could not do my job without our team. I wake up loving the people I work with and I am confident that Steve and Barney could say the same. None of our ideas involve rocket science or higher levels of thought, it is obvious, but we feel that what we have is worth sharing and worth you taking back to your own areas of work.

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