

## **Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Professional in Residential Learning Communities**

The following is a definition of collaboration between academic and student affairs professionals. For the purpose of this definition, student affairs professionals include anyone working toward the support of student development and/or providing services to students. Academic affairs professionals is assumed to include faculty, academic administrators, and/or anyone else working toward the support of student academic support and/or growth. This definition is intended to be used with and is reliant on the contextualization shared in the further description of each element within the definition.

**Collaboration between academic and student affairs is the continuous process of cultivating an interdependent relationship where each stakeholder is mutually committed to working toward the shared purpose of holistic student learning.**

### **Continuous process.**

Collaboration between academic and student affairs in Residential Learning Communities (RLCs) is an ongoing process that takes time and effort to develop and sustain. Collaboration is not an end state, but rather a fluid process that evolves and can devolve as challenges arise and/or various features change (e.g., stakeholders, institutional priorities, organizational structures, and resources).

### **Interdependent relationship.**

Collaboration between academic and student affairs in RLCs is interdependent and characterized by trust and shared decision-making. Collaboration is based on an understanding and valuing of curricular and cocurricular experiences, one another's unique contributions toward the shared purpose, and one another's professional norms. This interdependent relationship reflects integrated rather than parallel efforts among stakeholders toward holistic student learning.

### **Commitment to shared purpose.**

The shared purpose of RLCs is holistic student learning which is broadly defined as learning derived in curricular and co-curricular settings in the context of student development. Collaboration requires the RLC to have a clearly defined shared purpose which may vary by institution yet is understood, embraced, and practiced by all stakeholders. A commitment to the shared purpose of the RLC is demonstrated by mutual engagement and a mutual, not necessarily equal, commitment of resources (e.g., human, financial, space).

### **A Note on Collaboration and Campus Culture.**

Institutional and divisional cultures can support or interfere with collaboration between academic and student affairs in RLCs. For example, support from institutional leadership regarding collaboration, resources to support the RLC, and an understanding that collaboration supports the institutional mission are cultural elements that vary by institution. It is important for stakeholders to acknowledge and discuss how campus culture influences collaboration in RLCs.