TRENT UNIVERSITY

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: November 16, 2023

Time: 3:00 – 4:00pm

Location: Teams

Attendees: Jen Coulter, Jillienne Simone-Burns, Daniel Brisebois, Julia Bedding, Alexx Bodden, Rylee Neil, Vedanshi Jigarbhai Desai, Amy Graves, Riley Ambrose

MINUTES

I. **Land Acknowledgement, Daniel Brisebois.**
   a. Provided "Whose Land" resource, link to website for reference

II. **Review of minutes from March 21, 2023 meeting, Julia Bedding.**

III. **Welcome and introductions, Chair – Jen Coulter.**

IV. **Jen shared an orientation presentation with the group to introduce the Housing Advisory Committee goals and purpose.**
   a. A copy of the presentation is attached for your reference.
   b. We regularly collect feedback from both on and off-campus students to find opportunities for improvement. We use surveys, committees, and our partnership with Student Affairs to gather this information.
   c. Our purpose is to provide a safe, caring, and welcoming living experience that contributes to student success. Students in residence deal with a lot of transition and can struggle with their mental health. We work to connect them with the support they need to get on track.

V. **Jen discussed the new college/residence.**
   a. A naming ceremony took place on 11/15/23 for the new college. It will be named Gidigaa Migizi in honour of beloved elder and professor, Doug Williams.
      i. Additional information about this is available on the myTrent homepage for your reference.
   b. The new building will be located on the east bank and will offer 700 beds (we currently have 2,000 beds), tap access, a new dining hall, study and social lounges on every floor, green space, and retail space. It is expected to open in 2028.
   c. At its highest this summer, our residence waitlist was 400 strong.

VI. **Jillienne discussed recent renovation projects.**

a. Renovation projects this year have included some of the following:
- Creation of a service center in the Water Street annex.
- Parcel lockers install in Wallace Hall.
- Office space refreshes.
- East service center taken offline to increase functionality and offer better professional workspaces. RLC office has been moved upstairs due to this.
- Increased capacity of office spaces to support new staff members.

b. This year's renovation budget 1.3 million dollars. The goal is to maintain this year over year, though we have a limited period each year to carry out renovations while avoiding student impact. There is a balancing act in scheduling and budgeting for these projects.

c. We have signed off on 35 engineering studies for Lady Eaton and Champlain Colleges. This means that we will have consultants and engineers visiting and evaluating the building's more technical needs.

d. I will share any updated timelines at our next meeting for ongoing projects: acoustical ceiling tiles, glazed doors, emergency lighting installations and wall seals.

VII. **Jillienne discussed off-campus housing.**

a. The team is growing, we have just hired a Community Housing Associate for the Durham campus.

b. We are focused on providing guidance to students having various housing issues, landlord disputes for instance. Our website details the current resources we have available.

c. We are looking to work with Durham College and UOIT in Oshawa to develop a Durham Housing Guide.

VIII. **Dan discussed the Best Practice Analysis project.**

a. Over the summer, our department started a project called the Best Practice Analysis.

b. We invited consultants from other universities to look critically at our policies, practices and programs for student staff training within the Residence Life and Education Units.

c. It is important to understand our pain points and identify areas for improvement so we can continue to provide the best experience as our residence population continues to grow. This has not been done before; this was an opportunity to identify a clear plan for our goals.

d. 22 formal recommendations were made following the analysis. There was some focus on changing our Living Learning Community programs, and our Residence Education Initiatives. We are now formulating plans and timeline commitments.

e. A copy of the report is attached for transparency and for your reference. It is a large document (not mandatory reading), but there are some good summaries that can provide an overview. We are excited to get started on this work and see what can be built!

Next Meeting:

- November 30, 2023, 1:00 – 2:00pm

ORIENTATION

to the Housing Advisory Committee

TRENT UNIVERSITY

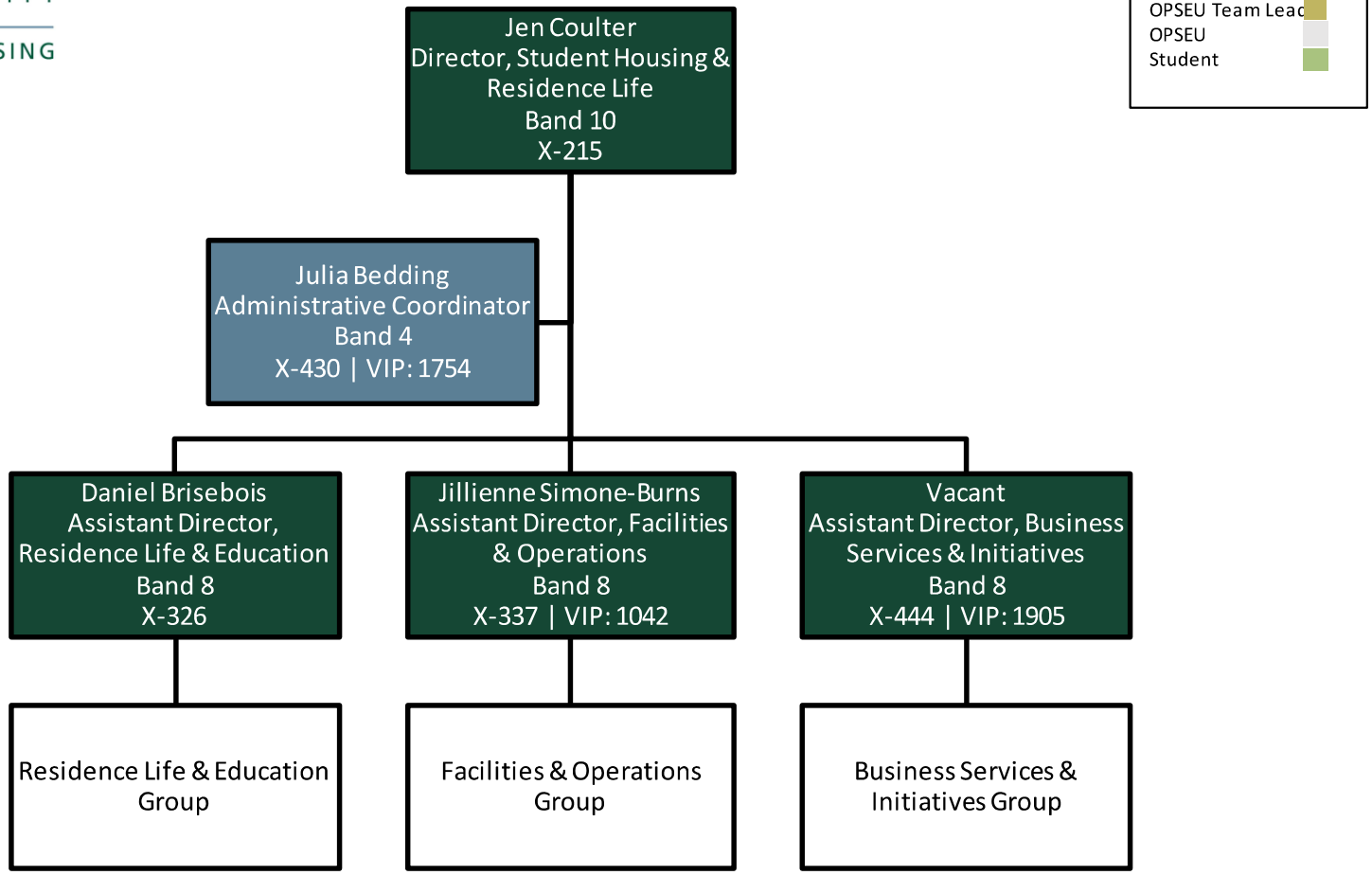
STUDENT HOUSING

- Residence & off-campus housing supports
- Peterborough & Oshawa, ON
- 2,000 residence beds
- 11 buildings & 3 houses
- $18M budget
- 100+ team members

TRENT UNIVERSITY

TRENT UNIVERSITY
STUDENT HOUSING

Leadership Team

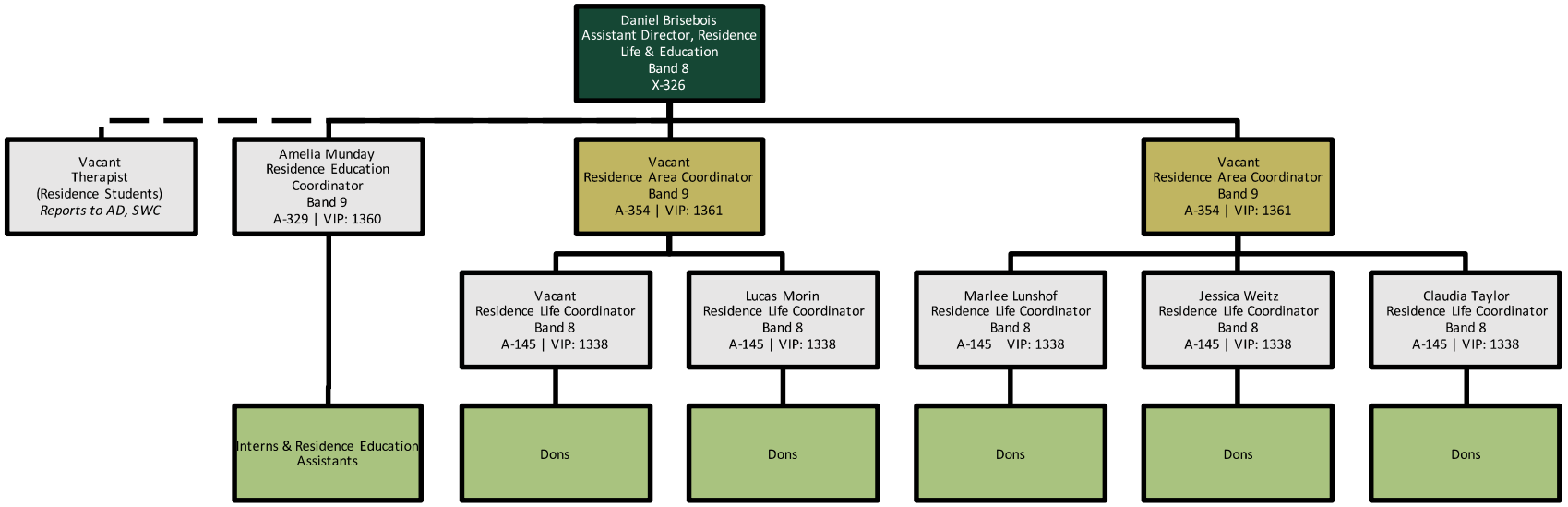


TRENT UNIVERSITY

TRENT UNIVERSITY
STUDENT HOUSING

Legend:
Leadership Team
Exempt
OPSEU Team Lead
OPSEU
Student

Residence Life & Education Group

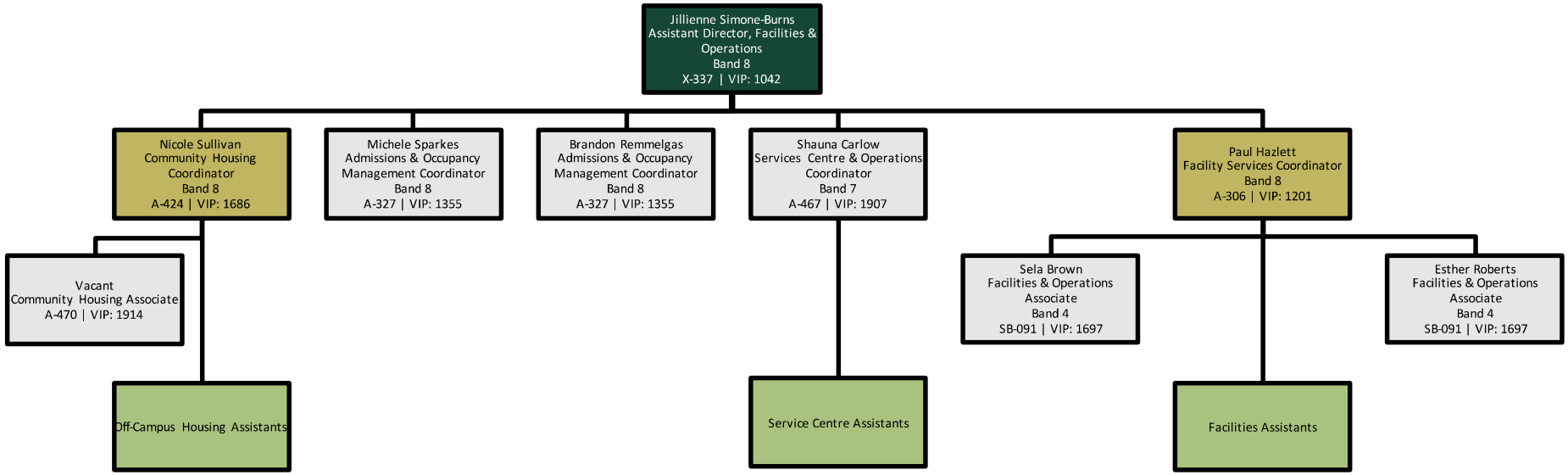


TRENT UNIVERSITY

TRENT UNIVERSITY
STUDENT HOUSING

Legend:
- Leadership Team
- Exempt
- OPSEU Team Lead
- OPSEU
- Student

Facilities & Operations Group

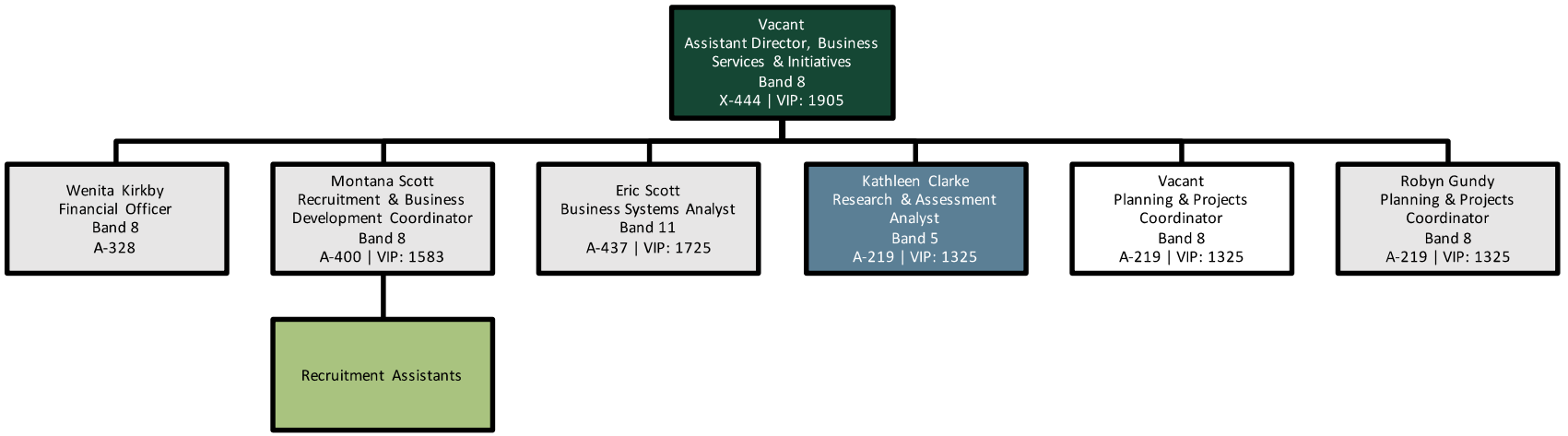


TRENT UNIVERSITY

TRENT UNIVERSITY
STUDENT HOUSING

Legend:
- Leadership Team
- Exempt
- OPSEU Team Lead
- OPSEU
- Student

Business Services & Initiatives Group



OUR PURPOSE

As stewards of the University, we provide a safe, caring, and welcoming living experience that contributes to student success.

OUR CORE VALUES

- We put people first and consider the whole person in caring ways as we seek opportunities to contribute to the academic mission.
- We work to support the health and well-being of our community to create a welcoming and inclusive experience for students, staff, and guests.
- Our staff teams listen to students and guests as we design our services in innovative ways to enrich our programs.
- We provide sustainable services and social programs that add value and vibrancy to our communities so the University can prosper.

CASSC

- Standing committee to the AVP, Students
- Consultation for committees and task forces
- Review ancillary fee proposals
- Recommendations to the Board & Senate
- Membership:
  - College Cabinets
  - TCSA, TGSA, TUNA, TISA
  - Committee chairs
  - Staff representatives

CASSC COMMITTEES

- Athletics
- Colleges
- Student Housing
- Food Services
- Orientation
- Student Wellness
- Convocation
- Campus Card
- Trent Nature Trails
- Campus Safety
- International Scholarship Fund
- Careers & Experiential Learning
- Student Charter of Rights & Responsibilities
- Spiritual Affairs
- Co-Curricular Record
- First Peoples House of Learning

HAC

- Consultative body for Student Housing
- Discusses and makes recommendations on issues that impact undergraduate, graduate, and off-campus housing experiences in Peterborough & Durham
- Reviews and makes recommendations on the annual satisfaction survey data.

CONSULTATION & DECISION MAKING

- HAC makes recommendations to HLT
- HLT makes operational decisions
- Roberts' Rules of Order

HAC REPRESENTATIVES

Representing	Position
Residence Students	Residence Council President from each College/Durham (6) College Cabinet representatives (5)
Residence & Off-campus Students	TCSA President or Vice President College & University Affairs (1) TGSA President (1) TDSA President (1)
Employees	Peterborough student employee (1) Durham student employee (1) Housing professional team member (1)
Colleges	Principal (1)

BUDGET PROCESS

- Ancillary budget
- Non-tuition, non-compulsory fee protocol
- Steps:
  1. *Consultation with HAC*
  2. Review by VP
  3. *HAC Vote*
  4. *Residence Council Vote*
  5. *CASSC Presentation*
  6. *Durham CASSC Presentation*
  7. President & Vice Presidents Presentation
  8. Finance & Property Committee
  9. Board of Governors

WORK PLAN

November #1
- Committee Orientation
- New College & OC Residences
- RLE Best Practice Analysis

November #2
- Room Fees
- Renovations

January
- Renovations
- Budget & Fees

February
- Residence Standards
- New College & OC Residences

March
- EDI Strategy
- Celebration

MEETING DATES

- November 16, 2023
- November 30, 2023
- January 25, 2024
- February 20, 2024
- March 11, 2024

CHALLENGE THE WAY YOU THINK

Trent University- Best Practice Analysis

Residence Life & Education

Best Practice Analysis (BPA)

Final Report

2023-10-04

Executive Summary

During the spring of 2023, the Trent Residence Life & Education (RLE) unit within Student Housing embarked on a Best Practices Analysis (BPA) to better understand areas of operational efficiency and success. It was a pleasure to complete this BPA and the BPA team is thankful for the opportunity.

The BPA team commends Trent University Student Housing for initiating this BPA and for their commitment to continuous improvement. The BPA team found many innovative and best practices in place at Trent. The team was impressed by the quality of documents, the commitment to continuous improvement of the RLE team, and the overall positive feedback that all stakeholders shared with regards to staff that work within RLE. It should also be noted how detailed, thorough, and organized the Trent team was in coordinating this BPA.

The BPA team for this process was Chad Nuttall, University of Toronto Mississauga, Dave Kim, University of Toronto, and Clayton McCourt, St Jerome's University.

This BPA was guided by best practices in the field and the ACUHO-I Professional Standards. It consisted of a detailed document analysis, on-site visit, and stakeholder interviews.

The BPA has made 22 recommendations and identified five (5) has high priority. The chart below captures the recommendations, and the subsequent sections delve into more detail.

Recommendation (shortened descriptor)	**High Priority**	**Suggested Timeline**
1. Recommend reviewing presence and integration of EDI-related statements, imagery, and practices in physical spaces, hiring documents, training, and professional development.		Winter 2024
2. Recommend prioritizing 2-4 EDIA Recommendations for the Year		Fall 2023
3. Recommend general re-orientation toward Community		Winter 2024
4. Recommend an increase in Mental Health and Wellness-focused supports (including staff roles)		Fall 2023

5. Recommend a Mental Health / Wellness / Student Support staff resource		Winter 2024
6. Recommend RLC focus their time on the Dons and the students in their assigned area		Fall 2023
7. Recommend improvements to the recruitment, hiring and selection of the student-staff		Fall 2023
8. Recommend increasing student-staff compensation		Fall 2023
9. Recommend review of student staff training delivery model and incorporating more opportunities for hands-on learning including scenarios-based approaches		Spring 2024
10. Recommend implementing a Don term cap and/or review criteria for returner Dons		Fall 2023
11. Recommend RLC contract limits be 3 years minimum		Fall 2023
12. Recommend increasing Professional Development budget for full-time professional staff		Fall 2023
13. Review relation of Durham Campus Housing Residence Life & Education program in relation to Peterborough Campus.		Spring/Summer 2024
14. Recommend Residence Education have an articulated identity and purpose.		Spring/Summer 2024
15. Recommend consolidation and improvement to Living Learning Communities.		Winter 2024
16. Recommend suspending interest-based Living Learning Communities		Spring 2024
17. Recommend a new staffing model for Living Learning Communities.		Spring 2024
18. Recommend terminating Residence Council under the current structure and reallocate resources elsewhere in Residence Life and Education.		Spring 2024
19. Recommend the development of a collaboration strategy with colleges and other key campus partners.		Spring/Summer 2024
20. Recommend policies and procedures related to sexual violence and RLE's role are clarified and documented		Spring/Summer 2024
21. Recommend operational procedures to ensure Residence Conduct equity and transparency		Spring/Summer 2024
22. Recommend focusing Assessment for a Two-year Period		Spring/Summer 2024

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Background

Purpose of the Best Practice Analysis (BPA)

The purpose of this best practice analysis of the Residence Life and Education (RLE) unit is to assess quality, efficiency and productivity, alignment with strategic objectives of the university, identify opportunities for improvement, development, and growth, and assist the unit in clarifying priorities and goals.

This review will make use of the ACUHO-I (Association of College and University Housing Officers - International) Professional Standards. The Professional Standards provide guidelines and benchmarks for professionals working in the field of campus housing and residence life at colleges and universities. ACUHO-I is a professional organization that focuses on advancing the campus housing profession, and the Professional Standards play a crucial role in achieving this mission.

BPA Team Biographies

Chad Nuttall (he/him)
Assistant Dean of Students and International Initiatives
University of Toronto Mississauga

Chad is Assistant Dean of Students and International Initiatives at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). He provides strategic leadership to the Centre of Student Engagement, Student Housing & Residence Life, and the International Education Centre. Chad also leads international initiatives and division-wide research and assessment. Previously, Chad held senior housing officer positions at UTM and Toronto Metropolitan University. Chad is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Higher Education at OISE/University of Toronto. He also earned his MA from the OISE/UofT and his BA from the University of Guelph. Chad is a past President of the Ontario Association of College and University Housing Officers (OACUHO) and is currently a Global Ambassador with Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I).

Dr. David Kim (he/him)
Warden of Hart House
University of Toronto

Dave Kim currently serves as Warden of Hart House. Hart House is a student-focused centre for the arts, dialogue and wellness at the University of Toronto. Previously Dave served as Dean of Residence & Director of Student Life for Spaces & Experiences (Ancillary Services) and has held various roles in residences and student life since he joined the University of Toronto in 2007. Dave holds a PhD in Higher Education from OISE, where he is a sessional lecturer and coordinates a student internship program in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education. Prior to his work in the postsecondary sector, Dave had worked in the educational sector in East Asia for several years.

Clayton McCourt (he/him)
Director, Student Affairs at St Jerome's University

Clayton is the Director, Student Affairs at St Jerome's University. In this position he provides overall leadership for the strategic activities to support the student experience and wellbeing of students. Previously Clayton served as Associate Director, Residence Life at Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier). He is committed to creating safe and supportive residence communities and has led residence teams on both college and university campuses in Canada and the United States. Completing all his primary and secondary education in Europe, Clayton speaks fluent Italian, German, and some French. He completed his undergraduate degree in Political Science and Languages at Laurier, where he also began his career in student affairs as a Residence Life Area Coordinator. Previously, Clayton held leadership positions with Campus Living Centres, Michigan State University and McMaster University.

BPA Process and Framework

1. Objective of the BPA

The BPA team performed a best practice analysis of Residence Life and Education at Trent University. The BPA team assessed the quality, efficiency, and productivity of the RLE unit, and alignment with strategic objectives of the university. They also identified opportunities for improvement, development, and growth, and assisted the unit in clarifying priorities and goals. The BPA scope was limited to Residence Life & Education (not Student Housing in totality).

From initial consultation with Trent RLE, the BPA team identified the following themes/areas of examination:

- Human Resources: staff management, training, hiring, on-call structure, staff compliment, ratios
- Policy: conduct and behaviour policies and procedures, mental health supports
- Curriculum and Education: residence curriculum, living learning communities, student engagement
- Assessment: assessment research throughout the review

2. BPA Process

2A. Document Analysis

The success of any Best Practice Analysis (BPA) hinges on the availability and quality of source material and documents that inform the analysis. In this context, a process that involves a comprehensive examination of various documents, data, and information sources to gain valuable insights into a specific situation, project, or organization. In the case of the analysis in question, the BPA team was presented with a trove of documents and source materials that proved instrumental in conducting a thorough and insightful assessment.

The BPA team's work commenced with a meticulously curated collection of documents from the Trent team, encompassing a wide range of materials deemed crucial for the analysis. These materials were thoughtfully categorized into different segments, including Background and Contextual documents, documents of critical significance to the analysis, and collateral information. The comprehensive nature of this document compilation was nothing short of exemplary and showcased the Trent team's dedication to ensuring that the BPA team had all the necessary resources at their disposal.

The BPA team was pleased to receive these documents provided by the Trent team, totaling nearly 1,000 pages. This quantity demonstrated a commitment to transparency, a willingness to engage in a comprehensive evaluation process, and an understanding of the importance of equipping the BPA team with ample information. Such a wealth of source material allowed the BPA team to construct a robust foundation for their analysis.

These documents provided valuable context, historical perspectives, and a comprehensive view of the subject matter. With these documents in hand, the BPA team was able to gain a profound understanding of the strengths and successes that deserved recognition, the challenges that demanded attention, and the myriad factors that needed to be considered before arriving on campus. The rich collection of documents not only facilitated a comprehensive assessment but also underscored the commitment of both teams to the pursuit of excellence and informed decision-making.

As the BPA progressed, these documents would prove invaluable in shaping recommendations, identifying areas for improvement, and charting a path forward that would leverage best practices and insights gleaned from the extensive documental analysis. This document-rich foundation set the stage for a comprehensive and informed Best Practice Analysis that promised to yield valuable insights and guide strategic decision-making processes effectively.

2B. On-Site Interviews

The Trent team's coordination of on-site interviews for the BPA team deserves special recognition for its excellence. These interviews were marked by an exceptionally positive and supportive tone, leaving a lasting impression on all involved. Campus partners, who hold Residence Life and Education in high regard, were not only willing but enthusiastic about generously sharing their time and insights.

To ensure productive meetings, all interviewees were thoughtfully provided with questions in advance. This preparatory step contributed to the depth and quality of the discussions. Over the span of two intensive days, a total of 30 interviews were conducted.

Moreover, these interviews did not solely serve as data-gathering exercises. They also fostered a sense of collaboration and mutual support among all participants. The overwhelmingly positive feedback and the willingness of campus partners to engage so constructively further reinforced the commitment to improvement and the shared vision for the institution's success. In essence, the interviews were a testament to the power of open communication, collaboration, and partnership in achieving many shared goals.

The full list of interview participants is available in Appendix D.

2C. Timeline

Key milestones of the BPA are captured below. This is not an exhausted timeline but highlights the major components of the BPA. There were regular scheduled meetings with the BPA team and several meeting with the BPA team and Trent.

Dates	Milestone or Deliverable
2023-05-15	BPA Plan finalized
2023-06-02	Trent shares requested documents with BPA Team
2023-06-09	Questions for On-Site Meetings provided to Trent
2023-06-14 and 2023-06-15	On-Site Days
2023-06-30	Draft Report submitted to Trent for Comments and Feedback
2023-10-04	Final Report Submitted

2D. Formulation of recommendations and use of supporting evidence, literature, and professional practice

The BPA team used the ACUHO-I Professional Standards as a guide for this BPA. The BPA's approach to recommendations was to use synthesized supporting evidence (including but not limited to interviews, provided documents), literature, best practices in the field, and professional experience. Each recommendation may or may not be linked to a specific professional standard or piece of evidence. Many recommendations come from a collection of observations over the course of the BPA process. Also, it is important to note that the literature, or professional standards need to be used in a way that honours Trent's unique context (location, history, collegiate model, etc.). For example, in an interview a partner may identify a challenge that they observe based on their experience. Before arriving at a final recommendation to address this challenge, several options were explored by the BPA team that were supported by best practice and that they felt met the contextual needs of Trent.

3. Terminology and Acronyms

For the sake of reference, some of the acronyms and terminology used throughout this report is outlined below:

a. ACUHO-I – Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (https://www.acuho-i.org/)
b. BPA – Business Process Analysis
c. CACUSS – Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (https://cacuss.ca/)
d. LLC – Living-Learning Community
e. OACUHO – Ontario Association of College and University Housing Officers (https://oacuho.com/index.html)
f. RLE – Residence Life & Education
g. RLC – Residence Life Coordinator

Contextual Considerations

As part of this Best Practices Analysis, it is essential to set the stage by outlining elements of the complex tapestry of contextual considerations that would have varying levels of influence on the Residence Life & Education unit and the broader institutional landscape.

The team felt it important to identify several contextual considerations given the point of time that the BPA occurred. These have an impact on the operations of the Residence Life and Education team, as well as more broadly within the institution.

1. **Re-emergence from the pandemic** – With the COVID-19 global pandemic officially declared over as of May 5, 2023, this marks a monumental shift in our global society as well as how campus life and residence operations have been impacted. Due to the need to have rigid health and safety measures in place during the pandemic, this meant that students were often not able to gather in person, dine in dining halls, attend classes in person, and most activities had to be conducted online. For the residence teams, this also meant building a team culture predominantly through online means – training, meetings, and socials in addition to having to take on "extra" duties there were necessitated by health and safety restrictions (e.g., enforcing mask mandates). The 2022-2023 academic year marked the first year that was relatively "normal" for about 3 years which also means that norms and expectations for RLE have drastically shifted.

2. **Institutional and departmental growth** – Student Housing has experienced significant growth between August 2016 and May 2023 in terms of number of student beds and staffing. Starting with 1,000 beds, 6 professional and 40 student staff and growing to 2,200 beds, 26 professional and 100 student staff equates to more than doubling in all areas within 6 years, of which 3 were during the pandemic. Additionally, there is further growth projected for the department in the coming years. Given the turbulence of the 2020-2023 years, it can be expected that the department may not have had the opportunity to settle and re-establish a balance.

3. **Change in reporting lines** – During the interviews, some of the senior administrative changes were noted when discussing the integration of services and supports across the university. In addition to points 1 and 2 above, another condition that falls into the overarching trend of "change" is that of the departure of the AVP, Students and subsequent changes in reporting structures. Having 4 Vice Presidents hold some responsibility for a department that used to report into one role is a factor that should be noted in this BPA. This is noted here to further demonstrate some of the broader institutional changes that have occurred and with potential impacts on the stability and expectations on RLE. It is anticipated, however, that after some initial readjustment, the impact of this particular item would diminish. It is noted that a shift has more recently

occurred with Student Housing now reporting into the Vice President, Finance & Administration. Given the ancillary nature of Housing, this is consistent with some institutions (although this does vary across universities) and may offer some stability with a more direct reporting line. Several student services and supports are now fragmented across portfolios and the integration and effectiveness of these processes was discussed in several on-site interviews.

4. **Trends observed within the field** - In 2022, the Ontario Association of College and University Housing Officers (OACUHO) administered a survey to professionals in the field to better understand barriers in sustaining housing operations and retaining housing professionals in the field. The organization has since hosted a series of discussions and released information under the title, "State of Our Profession" (Cunha, 2022) that provides insights into trends that are being observed in the field. For example, to the question "What should OACUHO prioritize when it comes to understanding the State of Our Profession?", four prominent themes emerged:
    a. Staff Support
    b. Mental Health & Wellness
    c. Changing Needs in Residence & Housing
    d. Care After Covid

    Under these broad themes, some specific areas of need that were noted include: providing counselling and mentorship programs for staff; increased focus on mental health & wellness supports; and higher-level crisis management. Overall, this speaks to the evolving complexity of care and support that is being seen across the field. This is further supported by the findings of Seager (2023) who conducted a study investigating the mental health of housing staff since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study highlighted the impact on the mental health of housing professionals during the pandemic and underscores the need for more attention to this particular issue.

Findings, Analysis and Recommendations

6A. Overall Observations

As part of the Best Practices Analysis, the BPA team had the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive analysis of key documents that were provided by the RLE team as outlined in the BPA Process and Framework section of this document. In addition, The BPA team took part in a campus tour and met with stakeholders from across Trent University over a 2-day period. This gave the team the opportunity to compare input from the stakeholder interviews to the contents and messaging contained in the documents provided. Having an impression of consistent messaging between the student staff, student leaders, staff teams, and senior leadership with institutional documents also contributed to an understanding of how well they are aligned.

As part of this section, the observations outlined are based on the information that emerged from stakeholder interviews including more prominent themes, document analysis, the experience of the BPA team, and comparisons made with the ACUHO-I Standards & Ethical Principles (2020) document.

The BPA team was delighted to find a very strong and well managed RLE unit that consistently demonstrated a high level of commitment to their departmental goals as well as a personal sense of care for their teams. This was made evident through consistent messaging that was conveyed by interview participants including student staff, full-time staff, and senior leadership. Comments were also made from multiple individuals highlighting the reputation of the unit as being invested in relationships. Some language that was used in describing the RLE team included “collaborative and welcoming” and “in terms of morale, people want to work here [RLE]”.

Continuous Improvement

RLE is focused on continuous improvement and holds themselves to a very high standard of professional practice. In addition to observing this being communicated through the interviews with each team member, an example of this was demonstrated upon review of the “Residence Life Staff Performance Evaluation” (see Appendix B: BPA Reference Documents Set 1, p. 285). As part of the staff performance evaluation, there are questions specific to ongoing development, for example:

- “Seek feedback and develop opportunities to increase one’s competencies in the role. RLS is willing to solicit and accept appropriate feedback from others”

- “Identify self-competency level and craft a realistic self-assessment of performance”

The departmental stance in support of professional development was also noted through the policy document, “Professional Development” (see Appendix B: BPA Reference Documents Set 1, p. 276). This document outlines the purpose, scope, and types of professional development (e.g., conferences, associations) that are applicable to the staff group.

According to the ACUHO-I Standards & Ethical Principles (2020) document, one of the key elements of planning within the business management functions performed by housing officers is: “A mission statement, a set of goals and objectives and a values statement supportive of that mission statement are an integral part of the program. These are reflected in job descriptions, policy statements, and guidelines for effective administration of the system” (ACUHO-I, 2020, p.5). Additionally, a key element of human resources is “Training, supervision, evaluation and resources to accomplish assigned tasks are provided to each staff member” (p. 5). The documents provided by the RLE team further support the framework of the unit in maintaining a high degree of performance in these areas, specifically through these examples:

- “Who we are, what we do, and how we work together.” (see Appendix C: BPA Reference Documents Set 2, p. 41)
- “Residence Life Staff Performance Evaluation” (see Appendix A: BPA Reference Documents Set 1, p. 285)
- “2023-24 Department Meeting Plan” (see Appendix A: BPA Reference Documents Set 1, p. 296)

Supportive Staff Culture

Across all stakeholder interviews, some consistent messaging conveyed with respect to the RLE unit included:

- A good reputation across the University as an area invested in relationships.
- A department that is open to feedback and continual development.
- Team members that are committed to developing trusting and strong relationships across the campus.

It is important to highlight the importance of these elements as developing a culture that is conducive to achieving success can be an extremely difficult feat. As quoted by Peter Drucker, a well-known management consultant, educator, and author: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast”. In essence, this speaks to the critical nature of fostering a positive culture as a key ingredient.

The unit administered a Skyfactor/EBI benchmark survey to student staff in March 2023 to assess areas of experience and to evaluate the housing program. The results (see Appendix C:

BPA Reference Documents Set 2) highlight several areas of strength with the staff team, including:

1. Supervisor support of student staff (p. 127)
    a. 91% positive ("Supporting you in your work)
    b. 92% positive ("Availability")
2. Management skills of supervisor (p. 128)
    a. 93% positive ("Providing constructive criticism")
    b. 96% positive ("Conducting staff meetings")

These results further speak to the high degree of satisfaction with respect to the full-time staff and their support and management of the student staff teams across the unit.

To further demonstrate the level of impact that the full-time team has on the student staff, the results below from the Skyfactor/EBI benchmark survey are also highlighted:

1. Student Staff Learning (p. 129)
    a. 96% positive ("Listen effectively to your residents")
    b. 93% positive ("Respect each other")
    c. 92% positive ("Communicate well with each other")
    d. 96% ("Problem solving skills")
    e. 96% positive ("Communication skills")
    f. 92% positive ("Work with people different from you")

Effective Documentation

In the initial stages of the BPA process, a broad number of reference materials were sent to the BPA team, including the Housing Strategy, survey results, staff organizational charts, and operational documents that relate to policies, conduct management, code of conduct, amongst others. All three members of the BPA team were impressed with both the comprehensive set of documents that exist within the RLE unit as well as the thorough nature of the contents within these documents that provide structure and a consistent framework to guide the team. The BPA team agreed that from their own experience, it is not common to have such a comprehensive set of reference materials within housing teams.

This section outlines some areas where the documentation within RLE stood out in terms of quality and depth of information. As outlined in the ACUHO-I Standards & Ethical Principles (2020) document, one of the key elements of Crisis Management is: "Ensure thorough planning documents and protocols exist through annual audits that identify, report, and respond to potential risks" (ACUHO-I, 2020, p. 15). An additional element under the Community Development function is: "Formulate codes, policies, regulations and standards to ensure a safe and secure living and learning environment for residents" (p. 14). Some examples where the

RLE unit demonstrated exceptional documentation based on the observation of the BPA team include:

- On-Call and other emergency procedure documents are thorough, detailed and easy to understand. For example, the RLE Response Matrix is clear and detailed and is an excellent training and reference document. The Incident Response Matrix for managers and Housing Leadership Team is also very well detailed and outlined.
- The Conduct Matrix provides a clearly articulated pathway of conduct management for the team. This is an excellent resource that is not always available for other residence operations. Continual integration into operations and training for teams with this pathway is encouraged.

Considering Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

As more universities are incorporating EDI into their strategic frameworks and policies (Universities Canada, 2019) and the populations we see on campus environments continue to become more diverse, the BPA team felt it would be prudent to provide some commentary on their observations of the RLE unit and environment.

Upon review of the website, provided materials, and physical spaces on campus, it was found that there are limited materials that explicitly refer to values related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism (see sample photos in Appendix E). Aside from a Commitment statement (https://www.trentu.ca/housing/about-us/commitment-equity-diversity-inclusion-anti-racism) posted on the Housing website, the presence of any other statements or imagery was found to be fairly minimal. Research has found that institutional EDI statements need to be connected to the work within student affairs departments to have any meaningful value and impact (Garcia, Walker, Morgan, and Shi, 2021). As such, the recommendations below provide a starting point of consideration for the RLE unit. Additionally, consultation with the institutional equity offices to further develop this area is recommended.

Recommend (#1) reviewing presence and integration of EDI-related statements, imagery, and practices in physical spaces, hiring documents, training, and professional development.

Review the Commitment to EDI, & Anti-Racism statement, include more specific elements related to different equity-deserving groups, and consider the use of statements, iconography, and signage in both digital and physical formats to be placed in various spaces. It is important to consider this strategy for students and staff as well as those that are prospective (e.g., in hiring

documents) and both in visual forms but also as principles that are integrated throughout the program (e.g., onboarding, performance management categories).

Recommend (#2) prioritizing 2-4 EDIA Recommendations for the Year

The EDIA in Residence recommendations is a clear plan for improving EDIA in residence. However, there are 18 recommendations, and some are large projects. The Housing Leadership Team could develop an annual plan in consultation with the team and choose 1 per unit, or 2-4 collective goals from this plan.

6B. Community and Support

Recommend (#3) general re-orientation toward Community.

The ACUHO-I Professional Standards outline many professional standards or best practices related to Community Development (ACUHO-I Professional Standards, 2020). We have included a few samples statement below (from page 11 of the ACUHO-I Professional Standards, 2020). These are both professional standards and best practices in Residence Life and Education.

1. *Help new students to connect with their institution by connecting them to other residents and staff and developing a sense of personal comfort.*
2. *Provide environments/programs that reinforce the need for self-respect, respect of others and property.*
3. *Accepts students as individuals, each with rights and responsibilities, each with goals and needs and, with this in mind, seeks to create and maintain a community living environment in which optimal learning and personal development can take place.*
4. *Strives to establish a residential environment that promotes the appreciation, understanding and respect for differences.*

Although 58.9% of residents would recommend living on-campus to new students (SkyFactor Q109), only 39.1% report that living on-campus has contributed to their sense of belonging at the university (Skyfactor 105). As a result, we recommend Residence Life and Education be re-orientated toward fostering a strong sense of community.

Since the re-emergence from the global pandemic there have been significant reasons for the residence program to NOT focus on community. Those reasons being major institutional structural change and some general internal instability. It is evident that Trent provides many

different options for students to find and align with community (e.g., colleges, academics, leadership involvement opportunities).

To work towards this goal, RLE needs to ensure student staff understand the departmental expectations of community development and train them on the skills and behaviours required to develop strong communities. Less than half of respondents reported that their student-staff made an effort to get know them (Skyfactor Q19) and 42.1% of respondents report not interacting with their Don in an average week. Peer led community development is a best practice in the field and can help deliver on the community development professional standards outlined above. Improvement in this area could be measured using Skyfactor, both as an aggregate for the whole residence system but also broken down by individual community. To ensure Dons are connecting with their community various assessment tools can be used. A short survey can be administered to the residence community in mid-fall to measure the quality of the interactions. You can also assess the student-staff against some established community development milestones. Milestones can be a helpful guide for student-staff, particularly new staff. For example – have a 1on1 conversation with each student in your assigned area by an established date or learn all students names by a certain date.

A review of the student staff training schedule does show dedicated time for "team-time"; however, a more intentional review of the schedule should be conducted to establish when and how the professional team is both "teaching" about and showcasing to student staff the significance of community (e.g., Community Development 101, Getting to know your students, Facilitating community meetings, etc.). Sessions should include *why* community development is important but also train them on the actual skills required to be active agents in community development. Professional and returning RLE staff could provide great examples of what has worked in the past. Producing facilitation guides, sample scripts and templates for 1-on-1 interactions, community meetings and other important community development milestones can be very helpful for student-staff. These behaviours and expectations are active, and the training should be too, including opportunities to practice throughout the training period.

Residence Life and Education should define and be able to describe what role it plays in a student's "journey" toward finding community. At present, various stakeholder explain this role very differently. For example, is the role of RLE to provide opportunities for community development, or to connect students to the community in colleges? What is the 'unit of analysis' for the development of community. Is RLE focusing primarily on community development at with roommates, floors, buildings, colleges, academic program, or Trent-wide? The residence should establish strong and unique communities that are accessible to students.

Recommend (#4) an increase in Mental Health and Wellness-focused supports (including staff roles)

As noted in the reference documents, the development of risk mitigation strategies was required due to a series of high-level incidents that had occurred during the 2022-2023 academic year (see Appendix B: BPA Reference Documents Set 1, "Risk Mitigation Strategies", p. 597). In addition to reviewing the measures that were in place and developing a protocol, several other factors needed to be considered including a strategy for distribution of medication, and support for the student before they are connected with a health professional.

As noted under point #4 of "Contextual Considerations", mental health & wellness was noted as one of the top themes impacting professionals in the housing field today. Given the severity and complexity of issues that have been managed by the Residence Life & Education team, it is recommended that the department explore an increase in internal wellness-focused supports. Some examples of systems in place at other institutions include:

- Trinity College and the University of Toronto introduced some new initiatives to address community need https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/engage/student-services/health-wellness/
- UTM implemented an *On-Call Group Debrief and Support* structure to provide support to RLCs in the types of concerns they may encounter in their work. This is both group and coordinated 1-on-1 counselling with an external counsellor.

Recommend (#5) a Mental Health / Wellness / Student Support staff resource.

When planning the staffing model for 3000+ beds (after planned construction), we recommend a dedicated staff member to support mental health and student support. This could include staff support, managing complex cases and meeting with students that require the most support. A position like this can leverage some experience and training (although they need not be a counsellor). This position should be within RLE but should be developed in partnership with Student Wellness to ensure role clarity.

6C. Employment and Talent Management

From the experience of the BPA team, residence communities are generally 1 Don to 40-50 students. This represents a Don to student ratio that is a best practice in the residence field in

Ontario. Watch to ensure communities do not get too large as the addition of students makes it more difficult for Dons to be connected to students in their community. Any disparity on community size is something closely noted by Dons and residence life staff. The BPA team suggests (if you are not already) assigning larger (or more challenging) communities to experienced (vs new) Dons.

The Residence Life Coordinator position is a high turnover position at Trent. Many RLCs enter their contract with limited previous experience and there is a relatively low experience profile among RLCs. The BPA team suggests this position be primarily focused on direct service functions. RLC should focus on implementing established processes, procedures, and projects. The BPA team suggest RLC should focus on support student-staff teams and engaging with students in their assigned buildings and communities. Any higher order functions such as assessment, planning and reviewing processes, procedures and projects should be left to the Area Coordinators and AD levels as appropriate. Including RLCs as stakeholders in the continuous improvement process is important to the success of the departments and their own development. However, we suggest only the most experienced RLC should lead any reviews or process improvements. The ACUHO-I Core Competencies guide (ACUHO-I Core Competencies, 2012) can be a good resource here.

From interviews and our site visit some centralized campus offices will be playing an increased role in some elements in student behaviour management. The role of the Area Coordinator can be recalibrated to reflect these student affairs capacity improvements. For example, if Student Affairs staff can take on sexual investigations (discussed later) than the Area Coordinators will have capacity to lead more assessment, planning and *managing* functions in RLE.

From our on-site interviews we know that new buildings are on the horizon. In the near terms the residence system will be 3000 beds. When thinking about Employment and Talent management we suggest you start to work toward a staffing model that RLE will require to deliver best practice service at 3000 beds. Growth plans can play out of the coming years with a head count increase coming closer to building opening. However, any position/structural changes should be made within a context of eventually being a 3000 beds system. Given the experience profile of your RLCs we suggest you keep the RLC to student ratio relatively low. One RLC to 300-400 students is manageable for a new professional. As RLE grows and you hire more RLCs the Area Coordinator position may need to be converted to a management position to provide appropriate support and oversight to professional. This could also help attract and retain quality Area Coordinators.

Recommend (#6) RLC focus their time on the Dons and the students in their assigned area.

The Dons report positive experiences with their RLC with respect to support. Student staff report positive results on supervisor support (Student Staff Skyfactor, Q38), availability (Q37), conducting meetings (Q41), etc. To strengthen this and improve we recommend that the RLC supervise and support traditional Dons only. We have outlined LLC staffing in the recommendation (below) for your consideration.

Recommend (#7) improvements to the recruitment, hiring and selection of the student-staff.

The student staff are very dissatisfied with the current hiring practice (Student Staff Skyfactor, Q17I, Q19, Q20). A hiring carousel could be one way of improving this process. One-on-one virtual interviews are not a best practice in the Student Housing Field and are not likely sufficient to identify successful candidates in such a public facing, people focused position. Although not perfect a hiring carousel or group process better stimulates the residence environment. A carousel also allows you to see many more perspective applicants.

A successful recruitment starts with solid understanding of what the expectations and key messaging of the student staff roles. We recommend that this "sales pitch" for the Don role is focused on the community development aspect of the role (as outlined in Recommendation #3). Statements like "heart of the Trent community" or other keywords could signal and attract applicants that want to be an important part of a special community. Using student-staff testimonials can be powerful but it is important to choose the right staff and key messages that reflect where you are going.

Information sessions early in the process can help reinforce these key messages focused on community. This could also draw student staff that represent the community.

Leveraging the broad Student Housing team (in and outside RLE) in the hiring and selection (particularly if you implement a carousel) could be helpful given the relatively low experience profile of the RLC. There are many experienced staff in leadership, operations, and administrative teams. Leverage their experience in a hiring and recruitment process. Use staff across Student Housing team to evaluate candidates and help identify successful candidates. Include experienced staff in debrief discussions so that less experienced staff can benefit from their experience and wisdom. Ensure all staff that participate are presented with key message on what you are seeking. EDIA and anti-bias training are also essential in this process. As our students are learning about applying and interviewing for jobs, some training and preparation in partnership with Career services is a common practice in our field.

Currently live-in student staff are accepting a position without knowing their supervisor, area or placement or roommates. Best practice is to provide staff with as much information as possible, as early as possible. Whatever information cannot be shared near time of offer, we recommend sharing increasingly levels of information as you move through the post-offer

period. A common practice is to scaffold this communication and connect it with newsletter-type updates. Consider assigning returners and or seniors first and communicating to them earlier to ensure they are aware of their placements prior upon accepting their offer.

Recommend (#8) increasing student-staff compensation.

Although the student staff generally seem dissatisfied with the compensation with 57.7% very or moderately dissatisfied (Q31), the primary reason for this recommendation is to more competitive and to attract the best candidates on-campus and ensure experienced, top-tier students in these roles.

Two-thirds of student leaders reported additional employment outside of their student staff role. Although this will be manageable for some, many students will be challenged to hold multiple positions and full-time studies. RLE could gather some qualitative data to better understand this and the challenges that may result. By increasing compensation, the hope would be reducing the number of student-staff that hold additional employment outside the department.

Throughout our on-site interviews we asked what the top student leader position on-campus was – there is no consensus on this. This is an opportunity to position the student staff positions in Student Housing as the top student positions on-campus. By increasing compensation and paying more than other offices you will signal the importance of the position, increase applicants, and hopefully attract some more experienced student leaders. When students see other high-quality candidates in these roles, that will further benefit your recruitment efforts.

Another improvement to the compensation package for the live-in student staff is changes to the required meal plan. Attempt to do whatever is possible in your context by considering making the meal plan optional for live-in student-staff, developing a specific smaller/less expensive meal plan, or further subsidizing the meal plans for student staff. The BPA team recommends further qualitative discussion with current student staff about the meal plan and their compensation.

Recommend (#9) review of student staff training delivery model and incorporating more opportunities for hands-on learning including scenarios-based approaches.

An area of improvement according to the student staff survey (Skyfactor) is training. It was noted through the survey and our interviews that the training model is currently based on a traditional facilitator-centered approach where the student staff are, for the most part, passive

participants in a classroom setting. Given that this spans approximately two weeks at the start of the school year, it was highlighted that the format is not conducive to effective learning and the opportunities to apply their learning before starting in their positions were sparse. Given the condensed format and content of the training program, it is recommended RLE consider the following elements: 1) Incorporating more opportunities for hands-on learning including scenarios-based approaches 2) Consider spacing out the topic areas – e.g., focus on critical skills at the start of the year and visit other topics during in-service training. Ensure there are adequate opportunities for student staff to practice their skills (role playing, practising in partners) – particularly those skills supporting community development as outlined above. Ensure there is an opportunity to practice in (almost) every session as well as daily opportunities to practice with peers outside of session (e.g. team time) as the week goes on.

Recommend (#10) implementing a Don term cap and/or review criteria for returner Dons.

RLE should establish clear responsibilities and criteria required of returning dons. Connect to our recommendation of increasing compensation you want to ensure a balance of new students into the department. We recommend implementing a Don term cap (e.g., 1 year contract with a maximum of two renewals) and/or to review the criteria for returner Don applications to ensure that the best candidates are invited to return. If returning dons have additional requirement or expectations or particular value to delivery to the department (coaching others, helping on-board RLCs, etc.) this should be articulated and evaluated in the returning don process.

Recommend (#11) RLC contract limits be 3 years minimum.

RLE is likely to continue to experience high turnover in the RLC position. However, the current 2-year term is too short. Staff reported starting their job search after 1 year. By offering 3-year terms staff are not likely to begin searching until at least 2 years. There are a range of term lengths in Ontario (many have 3-year) and several institutions with permanent positions. The institutional context and culture are important in determining this. However, the two-year contract is impacting retention and is a significant push factor for RLCs. The BPA team recommends that this change occurs quickly with human resources to ensure the current RLCs do not start their search and also so the RLE unit can market 3-year terms when the next vacancy occurs. Three-year terms also allow the unit to build out a scaffolded, multi-year training and development program for the RLCs.

The RLC on-boarding appears to be thoughtful and thorough. Given the RLC turnover, it is prudent to structure the training and on-boarding to be efficient and easily repeatable. Ensure an outline with learning outcomes of each session and presentation slides are archived to ensure continuity. The on-boarding can be paired with a series of check-ins with Area Coordinators and AD, Residence Life & Education.

Ensure any presentation materials delivered by peers are reviewed by Area Coordinators and/or AD, Residence Life & Education. Sessions that can be recorded and available asynchronously will help with efficiently, repeatability, and consistency. New staff can also go back and re-watch – this could be particularly good for sessions on technology or systems.

Recommend (#12) increasing Training, Professional Development budget for full-time professional staff.

Given the turnover of the RLC position, the RLE unit may want to continue their current scheme for this group. However, for continuing/non-contract positions like the Residence Area Coordinator and the Assistant Director, Residence Life, a marked increase in professional funds is recommended. Conference registration and travel costs have increased significantly post-pandemic. A quick analysis of cost (registration, hotel, travel, food) for the New Professionals Training Institute, OACUHO, ACUHO-I, CACUSS and/or a Management Conference could provide a good baseline. This could help to satisfy the training needs of new staff and assist with staff retention for the ongoing/permanent roles.

Recommend (#13) further review relation of Durham Campus Housing Residence Life & Education program in relation to Peterborough Campus.

The BPA team learned that Student Affairs at the Durham campus is entering a time of substantial growth. Given this growth and addition of substantial headcount it is recommended to move toward a more standalone, cross functional model of serving the Durham community.

This does not mean that RLE should stop serving the Durham campus or providing oversight – but perhaps the campus would be better served by a slightly more autonomous *General Manager* model that is cross functional. This change is not urgent and alternative staffing models could be explored in the coming years as the Peterborough campus edges toward 3000 beds.

6D. Residence Education and Student Leadership

Residence Education and Student Leadership are key components of the RLE program at Trent. The types of experiences and opportunities typically offered within these two areas are considered to foster increased student engagement and promote student success and persistence (Kuh et al., 2005). These types of experiences and opportunities can be more easily achieved when a program structures learning environments that are adapted for educational enrichment, ensure a shared responsibility for educational quality, and embrace an improvement-oriented ethos (Kuh et al., 2005). The BPA team observed that the RLE team is engaged in all these kinds of initiatives. It was also apparent that RLE at Trent embraces a contemporary learning philosophy. A contemporary learning philosophy, or approach to learning, is one where educators and professionals understand that learning no longer occurs only in the academic context, but rather see the entire university campus as a learning system (Keeling, 2006).

While RLE at Trent does not fall under the Division of Student Affairs, it should be understood and accepted that residence professionals regularly facilitate traditional student affairs work. Good practice in student affairs involves engaging in effective educational practice and living-learning communities (LLCs) are one example of effective educational practice (Manning, Kinzie & Schuh, 2006). The BPA team observed that RLE at Trent offers a wide range living-learning communities that are intended to resonate with a broad spectrum of learners. The BPA team also noted the existence of a student Residence Council within the RLE program. Residence Councils are an example of a student experience more typically associated with an extracurricular approach to student engagement. Students participating on a Residence Council are typically engaged in leadership development, as well as engaging skills and aptitudes most often associated with the development of values, understanding of citizenship, and a commitment to community (Manning, Kinzie & Schuh, 2006).

The following recommendations related to Residence Education and Student Leadership take into consideration that institutions of higher education are becoming more complex, and students are often greatly impacted by a fragmented educational process (Blimling & Whitt, 1999). The BPA team observed through interviews that Trent University has undergone significant change due to divisional realignments. The recommendations under this theme are intended to minimize complexity and fragmentation and are meant to help focus the efforts of residence staff.

Recommend (#14) Residence Education have an articulated identity and purpose.

The BPA team found that Residence Education (within RLE) is producing many exciting experiences, however the purpose and identity of Residence Education within RLE is unclear. An essential component to programs that elicit effective educational practice is a clearly articulated educational purpose and a coherent philosophy (Kuh et al., 2005). Although RLE does not officially adopt a curricular approach to learning outside of the classroom, living-

learning communities at Trent are evidence that RLE aligns with a similar learning philosophy. An essential element of a curricular or learning approach is a well-defined educational priority (Kerr et al., 2020). Articulating a more defined purpose does not need to be an exhaustive process but should be consultative with internal and external stakeholders. Good practice suggests forging educational partnerships, and while collaboration does not come easy, consulting academics or College Principals to develop an educational philosophy may be an opportunity to champion the promotion of learning (Blimling & Whitt, 1999).

Recommend (#15) consolidation and improvement to Living Learning Communities.

Creating or maintaining environments that are adapted for educational enrichment are strongly considered to be a significant factor to student learning, persistence and success (Kuh et al., 2003). Living-learning communities are a way to create human-scale learning environments and enable educators to design approaches to learning that encourage students to form strong connections through a sense of place (Kuh et al., 2003). For these reasons, it is recommended that LLCs continue to remain a priority for the RLE program. However, while each LLC has a campus/faculty partner – partners are not clear on a primary point of contact within RLE, and upon examination partnership expectations were found not always to be clear. Many campus partners reported to the BPA team that they had not delivered anything to their associated community in several annual cycles. The BPA team did not solicit enough information to make recommendations about which LLCs are most successful. However, the BPA team does recommend each LLC be evaluated on the following factors: student demand, a quality campus partner/faculty, student engagement in the LLC, and student success (retention, GPA, etc.). Best practices regarding learning communities and other valuable resources can be found in the book Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education by Smith and Associates (2004).

The campus partner/faculty should have contact points with the community over the year. There should be some benefit to the partners as well – this could include letters from the Promotion/Tenure files, service hours or make up part of their formal job responsibilities. A simple chart of who does what across all LLCs will be very helpful for clarity and continuity. There is a fair amount of one-time work to be accomplished here so hiring an intern or casual staff member could help with the workload of professional who are already stretched.

Recommend (#16) suspending interest-based Living Learning Communities

Based on strong annual demand and enrollment, academic based LLCs appear to be more established and have a stronger foundation within the residence program. Evidence of this was

clear via interviews with the Residence Operations team who over the last few years have assumed the primary responsibility to assign students to these communities. Because these academic based communities are linked to strong academic interests and programs, more potential exists to structure a variety of curricular approaches around a common cohort of students with similar interests in time, credit, and learning experiences (Smith et al., 2004) Interest-based LLCs could be re-established once more consistent student experiences are provided. Suspension of these communities can also allow for a more focused assessment of engagement within the academic-based LLCs. Good practice in this realm consists of residence professionals using systemic based inquiry methods to improve student and institutional performance (Blimling & Whitt, 1999). A cycle of assessment for student learning and educational strategies is also fundamental according to Kerr at al. (2020).

Recommend (#17) a new staffing model for Living Learning Communities.

Living-learning Communities require leadership at many different levels, and establishing a collaborative leadership team is probably the single most important step in initiating or sustaining this type of learning opportunity (Smith et al., 2004). In fact, the National Learning Community Project conducted in the United States between 1996 to 2003 indicated that the majority of failed learning community initiatives were because of poor resources and small leadership teams (Smith et al., 2004). Most often, a learning coordinator is appointed to be responsible for learning communities, however it is also important to create a larger leadership team (Smith et al., 2004). With this in mind, the BPA team believes the Residence Education professional staffing model requires review.

The BPA team does not believe one Residence Education Coordinator is currently able to deliver on all LLCs and curricular work. There is currently one Residence Education Coordinator at a PB9, and adding a full-time staff member at a PB7 would provide the leadership team increased capacity to both manage and grow the living-learning program. The PB9 could take on continuity, planning, partner relationships and assessment. The PB7 could focus more on student-staff support, programming support and implementing program. Each living-learning community should also have two student leaders: 1) a Don who performs typical don functions and reports to the RLC of that community and 2) a specific LLC student staff member that focuses on fostering unique and special community, providing LLC specific programming. This person should report to the appointed professional staff member in Residence Education. The specific LLC student-staff position should be live-in, but not be on-call or perform any Don functions. The hiring profile of this position should be a student-staff committed to the focus of the LLC, and typically should be a high achieving student and a confident community builder. They should be considered equal, but different than the Don. The BPA team also believes that LLCs can thrive without the direct involvement of the RLCs.

Given that the residence program will expand to almost 3000 beds by 2028, considerable attention should be given now to how LLCs at Trent will be impacted in the future.

Recommend (#18) terminating Residence Council under the current structure and reallocate resources elsewhere in Residence Life and Education.

Over the course of interviews conducted with the Residence Life staff, the BPA team uncovered that the Residence Life program struggled to find adequate student talent to support a functioning Residence Council. On average it takes several weeks into the Fall term for the council to become operational, and the group often struggles to deliver on the overall objectives of a Residence Council.

The consensus across interviews was that there were too many student leadership positions on-campus for the number of qualified student leaders. The BPA team noted there is a strong opportunity at Trent, particularly within the Collegiate model, for RLE to promote pathways to other council and student leadership opportunities on campus.

Staff across the university report that the student leadership roles within the Residence Council have not helped prepare or develop students for future student leadership opportunities on campus. It should be noted that residences provided by educational institutions are not subject to the Residential Tenancies Act so long that all major questions related to living accommodations are decided after consultation with a "council" or other association representing residents (The Varsity, 2022). The BPA team recommends engaging other methods to consultation with groups of students regarding living accommodation matters. The Residence Council does not need to serve this function.

6E. Interfacing with Campus Partners and Operations

It is important for RLE to consider the conditions of the professional and educational landscape prior to establishing partnerships and collaborations. Some conditions worth noting within a higher education landscape include factors such as mutual interest, initiative, shared goals, shared leadership, shared resources, and a willingness to contribute time to initiatives (Schuh, Jones & Torres, 2017). Holzweiss & Parrot (2017) describe higher education institutions as a complex collection of divisions, colleges, departments, units and centres populated by very different groups of people with very different personalities, work styles, skill levels and ethical principles. Because of this, the environment can not only be difficult to navigate, but it can also be summarized by being equal parts supportive and hostile, clear and foggy, as well as rewarding and punishing (Holzweiss & Parrott, 2017).

Another factor for RLE staff to consider before sustaining, ending, or developing new relationships is the nature of work associated with the institution type. Trent University is self-described as a public liberal arts university. Hirt (2006) identified the professionals who work at Liberal Arts institutions as "standard bearers" of the profession, where administrators are service oriented, and student centered. When considering the nature of relationships at liberal arts universities, Hirt (2006) described all professionals as needing to work with key constituencies like student affairs, faculty, parents, and students.

Because the BPA team identified the impact of division fragmentation and realignment across many interviews, RLE should consider spending time on developing a common understanding of the current landscape at Trent and enter collaborations intentionally and with purpose.

The BPA team was impressed with internal RLE documentation, policy and procedures. Although departments are always looking for ways to tighten things up and improve – most of these documents are excellent and do not need full-scale review or re-amp. Given all the change and staff turnover, it appears that the information was not disseminated consistently.

Procedural and operational areas that require the most attention are the ones that interface with other campus units – specifically Campus Security and Student Affairs. We have outlined some recommendations below on the priorities.

Recommend (#19) the development of a collaboration strategy with colleges and other key campus partners.

The significance of the residence experience to student engagement at Trent was clear from the many responses collected during the BPA interviews. The willingness of partners and existing relationships in place to support the seamless integration of the residence life & education experience into the broader community. A consultative process in which key partners are engaged in the development of a collaborative strategy with RLE is suggested to establish a high-level understanding of the expectations for collaboration. The BPA team suggests a review of distinctive features or higher education as organizations might be helpful. For example, before entering in collaborative processes, RLE leaders should be aware that post-secondary institutions often have ambiguous goals, decentralized processes, and unclear decision-making processes (Schuh, Jones & Torres, 2017).

Recommend (#20) policies and procedures related to sexual violence and RLE's role are clarified and documented.

The BPA team observed procedural inconsistencies and signs of role confusion between Trent Security, Student Affairs and RLE. Inconsistencies related primarily to sexual violence procedures regarding investigations after a student disclosure is made in residence. This suggest that the Trent University sexual violence policy, procedures and protocols are not mutually understood or agreed upon. It would be prudent at this time to ensure RLE procedures and protocols are reviewed and documented, and that all RLE staff are clear on the requirements regarding sexual violence outlined in the Ontario legislation. Failure to ensure departmental clarity with regards to sexual violence investigations, introduces an opportunity for risk to the RLE and Trent University.

The review of RLE procedures and protocols relating to sexual violence investigations should require the involvement of partners within the Division of Student Affairs. The BPA team recommends the Division of Student Affairs also lead a review to ensure compliance on campus wide sexual violence investigations. However, the BPA team acknowledges that Trent Student Affairs is going through significant changes, and recommendations for departments external to RLE are outside of the nature and score of the BPA.

The BPA acknowledges that while different procedures and protocols relating to sexual violence exist across Ontario campuses, one clear campus wide policy to guide operational procedures exceeds best practices in this area.

Recommend (#21) operational procedures to ensure Residence Conduct equity and transparency.

Internal RLE processes and procedures look to be thoughtful, high quality and well documented. The policies and procedures are rooted in restorative and community philosophy. As the Area Coordinators are now both serving a more substantial conduct role – there was some examples in interviews that implied that approaches to conduct cases were not always discussed or shared. It is recommended that a singular approach to student conduct be established, and mechanisms should be developed to ensure Area Coordinators consult with each other to ensure consistency. Inconsistent applications of educational or behavioural sanctions can be detrimental from an equity and fair process perspective. Mechanisms to ensure consistency can also greatly improve transparency within the student conduct system. RLE staff also identified a desire for better tracking of conduct in the upcoming cycle.

Through interviews inside and outside of RLE the BPA team also identified opportunities where RLE might engage in a consultative dialog with key stakeholders and leaders regarding student behaviour and conduct. Opportunities include the ability to refine and document the residence and campus conduct processes. This process should involve various partners in Student Affairs.

Recommend (#22) focusing Assessment for a Two-year Period

The Skyfactor survey (as well as other assessments) can be overwhelming, and the *areas of improvement* can appear endless. We recommend reviewing this assessment (and others) as a team and identifying 1-2 Factors and/or <6 questions that RLE can really focus on for a two-year period. Discuss the merits of which factors are likely to make the highest impact. The BPA team suggests the focus be on satisfaction with the student-staff and/or sense of community. You could also focus on a few Skyfactor's factors that related to the recommendations in this BPA review. Capture this assessment plan on a single page or slide deck. Ensure all professional staff in the department are clear on the goals, the metrics, the targets, and the strategy. However, the assessment should be led by experienced permanent staff with the support of your assessment staff member.

For example, Improve the number of interactions student-staff have weekly with students in their community by X%.

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Appendices

Appendix A: BPA Plan

Trent University - Best Practice Analysis

Best Practice Analysis (BPA) Plan

2023-05-15

Important Dates and Deliverables:

Dates	Milestone or Deliverable
2023-04-14	Preliminary Sketch of the BPA
2023-05-02	Scope Meeting
2023-05-15	BPA Plan (this document)
2023-06-02	Trent shares requested documents with BPA Team
2023-06-09	Questions for On-Site Meetings provided to Trent (to Dennis)
2023-06-12	Trent Team + BPA Team Pre-Visit Check-In
2023-06-14 and 2023-06-15	On-Site Days
2023-06-30	Draft Report submitted to Trent for Comments and Feedback
2023-07-18 (to be scheduled)	Meet to review Comments and Feedback on Draft Report
2023-08-07	Final Report with sections outlined in the Scope
Date tbd	Presentation of Final Recommendations (tbd)

Objective:
To perform a best practice analysis of Residence Life and Education at Trent University. The BPA will assess quality, efficiency, and productivity, alignment with strategic objectives of the university, identify opportunities for improvement, development, and growth, and assist the unit in clarifying priorities and goals. The BPA scope will be limited to Residence Life & Education (not Student Housing in totality).

BPA Team:

Chad Nuttall (he/him) – 18 years in the field
Assistant Dean of Students and International Initiatives
University of Toronto Mississauga
ACUHO-I Professional Standards Reviewer

Clayton McCourt (he/him) – 15 years in field
Associate Director, Residence Life at Wilfrid Laurier University
Wilfrid Laurier University

David Kim (he/him) – 15 years in the field
Dean of Residence and Director of Student Life,
Spaces & Experiences (Ancillary Services)
University of Toronto

Themes/area of Examination:

- HR: staff management, training, hiring, on-call structure, staff compliment, ratios
- Policy: conduct and behaviour policies and procedures, mental health supports
- Curriculum and Education: residence curriculum, living learning communities, student engagement.
- Assessment: assessment research throughout the review

Professional Standards and Best Practice:

BPA team will use ACUHO-I professional standards and the CAS standards as a guide. BPA team will also draw-on and leverage their experience and knowledge in Residence Life in Ontario universities to complete the analysis. Trent and BPA team have compiled a list of required documents to complete the analysis. These documents broadly fall into three categories.

Background and Contextual Documents:

These documents will allow the BPA team to get a better sense of Residence Life and Education at Trent but likely do not require examination or analysis. Examples of contextual documents could include demographic information, Student Housing Plan 2023-2026, and Board of Governor's Strategic Direction.

Critical Document Analysis:

For the procedural and organizational documents outlined in the scope the BPA team will examine and review the documents to identify areas of interest, gaps, opportunities for further discussion.

Collateral Information Gathering:

The BPA team will collect key supporting material from outside sources on 'areas of concern.' This could include organizational charts from peer institutions, example procedures for area of concern as outlined in the scope.

On-Site Interviews:

An on-site schedule has been prepared by Trent for the BPA team. The BPA team will use these meetings as valuable source of information. Questions for the meetings will be mapped to the 'areas of concern' outlined in the scope document. The BPA team will also use these meetings to clarify and focus potential recommendations.

Draft and Final Reports:

The draft and final report will include all the areas as outlined in the scope document. Each recommendation will follow a similar formula: our observations, our recommendation and whenever possible the urgency or priority of our recommendation.

The final report will include the following sections as outlined in the project scope:

- Detailed description of the review process
- Analysis of the unit strengths
- Identified areas for improvement, growth and change
- Analysis of the operations of the unit
- Analysis of staffing structure and rightsizing the operation through future growth
- Overall unit recommendations (high, medium, and low priority)

Appendix B: BPA Reference Documents Set 1

Page #	Document
19	Org Chart - Student Housing Leadership Team
20	Org Chart - Residence Life & Education Group
21	Org Chart - Operations & Services Group
22	Org Chart - Student Housing Leadership Team
23	Org Chart - Residence Life & Education Group
24	Org Chart - Facilities & Operations Group
25	Org Chart - Business Services & Initiatives Group
26	Residence Communities & Don Team Complements
29	Student Employment Guide
63	JD - Assistant Director, Residence Life & Education
68	JD - Residence Education Coordinator
71	JD - Residence Life Coordinator
75	JD - Residence Area Coordinator
83	JD - Senior Residence Life Don
88	JD - Residence Life Don (Peterborough Campus)
91	JD - Experienced Living Learning Community Don (Peterborough Campus)
96	Residence Life and Education Assistant (Peterborough Campus)
99	Living Learning Community Don (Peterborough Campus)
103	Collective Agreement - OPSEU 365
254	Hiring Document - Residence Education Coordinator
257	Hiring Document - Residence Area Coordinator
266	Hiring Document - Residence Life Coordinator
276	Policy Document - Professional Development
280	Student Staff Training Schedule
283	Community Management - Written Warning/Probation
285	Residence Life Staff Performance Evaluation
294	Community Management - Written Warning/Probation
296	2023-24 Department Meeting Plan
298	2022-2023 Residence Learning Model
376	Living Learning Communities (Peterborough)
384	Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities
415	Policy Document - Class Cancellations & Campus Closures
418	Agreement - Confidentiality & Sensitive Information
422	Policy Document - Department Owned Cell Phone Policy
427	Policy Document - On-Call
432	Policy Document - Room Entry
437	Response Matrix
440	Canvassing in Residence
441	On Call Expectations
443	Student Housing Smudging Policy

444	Residence Guidebook 2022-2023
484	Residence Guidebook 2022-2023
532	Residence Agreement - Peterborough College
540	Residence Agreement - Durham GTA
547	Procedure Document - Residence Community Health Concerns
551	General Incident Response Procedures in Trent University Residences
557	Incident Response Matrix
558	Pandemic Planning
570	Residence Closure Procedures
574	Use of Facilities for Quarantine and Isolation
576	Student Death in Residence Response Procedures
591	Housing Responses to Incidents of Sexual Violence
594	Student Housing Facilities & Operations Extended Hours Framework
596	Plan for Safety
597	Risk Mitigation Strategies - Medication Overdose Plan for Suicide
600	Student Conduct Assessment Matrix

Appendix C: BPA Reference Documents Set 2

Page #	Document
15	Board Directions 2022-26/27
29	Five Colleges Five Communities One Trent
41	Who we are, what we do, and how we work together (Housing Purpose Values)
42	Housing Strategy
58	Housing Strategy Background & Progress Summary
67	Housing 2023-2026 Plan
83	Surveys - Residents
117	Surveys - Student Staff
205	Student Staff Core Competencies
214	Budget - Residence Life
229	Budget - Office Supplies
235	Budget - Printing
247	Budget - Postage
249	Budget - Shipping Cost
251	Budget - Advertisement
257	Budget - Travel Cost
260	Budget - Computer Equipment
263	Budget - Cell Phone Purchase
266	Budget - Software
272	Budget - External Services
279	Budget - Parking
283	Budget - Uniform
285	Budget - General Supplies
291	Budget - Summer Programming
312	Budget - Planned Activities/Projects
313	Budget - Student Staff Training
316	Budget - Professional Staff Training
320	Budget - Recruitment
323	Budget - Cell Phone Charges
328	Budget - Long Distance Charge
331	Budget - Meeting Costs
337	Budget - Student Staff Appreciation
339	Budget - Move In Day Activities
347	Budget - Furniture and Equipment
353	Budget - Vehicle Gas
361	Budget - Major Project
366	Budget - Transfer to Durham
367	Housing Terms of Reference
370	Housing Advisory Committee 2023-24 Work Plan

371	College Residence Council - Constitution 2020-2021
381	EDIA in Residence Recommendations

Appendix D – Interview Participants

The individuals represented the professionals we had the privilege of meeting during our visit to Trent University. They play essential roles in various aspects of the university's operations and contribute significantly to its vibrant community:

- Rosa Aiello, Student (Rec and Varsity) Guest Experience Agent
- Aimée Anctil, President Trent Central Student Association
- Miguel Capilla Bagatella, International Student Program Assistant, Trent International
- Evan Bates, Assistant Director, Student Wellness
- Dan Brisebois, Assistant Director, Residence Life & Education
- Melanie Buddle, Principal, Gzowski College
- Jen Coulter, Director, Student Housing & Residence Life
- Michael Eamon, Principal, Traill College
- Christine Freeman-Roth, Principal, Lady Eaton College
- Dennis Geelen, Associate Project Manager
- Ashley Gerrits, Colleges Academic Support Coordinator
- Johanna Hart, Campus Programs, Co-Curricular Record and Spiritual Affairs Coordinator
- Andrew Harris, Residence Area Coordinator
- Gursharan Kaur, Residence Life & Education Assistant
- Lawrence Lam, Acting Associate Vice President, Students
- Brooke Lawler, Student Housing Services Associate
- Yiran (Krystal) Liu, Experienced Residence Life Don
- Denali Lockwood, Experienced Residence Life Don
- Victoria Medley-Parkins, Residence Life Coordinator
- Stephanie Muehlethaler, Principal, Otonabee College
- Amelia Munday, Residence Education Coordinator
- Keith Pau, Manager of Campus Security
- Brandon Remmelgas, Admissions & Occupancy Management Coordinator
- Jenifer Richardson, Director, Student Affairs Durham
- Mady Rodrigues-Raby, Residence Life & Education Assistant
- Michele Sparkes, Admissions & Occupancy Management Coordinator
- Monica Sok, Residence Life Coordinator
- Arwen Sweet, Manager, Sexual Violence Prevention
- Claudia Taylor, Residence Life Coordinator – Durham GTA
- Jessica Weitz, Residence Life Coordinator

Appendix E: Photos representing EDIA on campus

Figure 1: Medicine Wheel image from residence hallway

Figure 2. Progress Pride flag observed in building window

Figure 3. Bulletin board in residence with Progress Pride flag

Figure 4. Bulletin board in residence with Trent Association of Black Students sign

Figure 5. Dining hall space with Progress Pride flag

Figure 6. Gender neutral accessible washroom sign in residence