

Office of Residence Life lauded for entry-level recruitment practices

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The Alfred University Office of Residence Life was named one of five schools identified nationally as engaging in best practices for recruitment of entry-level residence life staff in 2008 by the Association of College and University Housing Officers International (ACUHO-I). ACUHO-I is the premier professional association for residence life professionals. There were four areas of criteria used to identify best practices: policies, processes, perks, and personalities. A team of researchers awarded an ACUHO-I-commissioned research grant in 2004 conducted the study. AU was brought to the team's attention through an electronic survey in 2007; the team then traveled to the campus for a site visit and evaluation. Brenda Porter, director of residence life at AU, said "One of my main goals as a supervisor is to understand each individual's professional goals so that I am best able to connect them with opportunities within residence life, student affairs, and AU in general. It is with this in mind that I frame any conversation I have with a potential employee within my department during the recruitment process." Kathy Woughter, Alfred University's vice president for Student Affairs, commented on Porter's contribution to the residence life honor. "She spends a lot of time and energy thinking about how to provide the best possible atmosphere of professional development for the mostly entry-level staff she supervises." Woughter said. "This honor makes it clear that candidates for Residence Life employment at AU understand that, and value it." Woughter also stated that at AU, the Residence Life staff interviews all candidates "to make sure they understand they will gain great experience." The Office of Residence Life conducts entry-level hiring in the spring semester of each academic year. The multi-step process includes an initial application; an interview with the associate director of Residence Life; a campus tour; lunch with current resident assistants (RAs) to discuss the experiences candidates should expect; a meeting with the dean of students; a meeting with the vice president for Student Affairs; a panel meeting with the search committee compiled of current RAs, resident directors (RDs), and Student Affairs representatives; and a final discussion meeting with Porter, director of Residence Life. One element that proves the measure of success in the Residence Life program at Alfred University, said Porter, is the number of graduate RDs who obtain assistant director or director positions after their RD experience at AU. That is really unheard of, said Porter. Professionals in higher education usually have to climb the ladder (professional RD, then area coordinator before they are even looked at for assistant director positions) at most places in order to get the experiences" Porter continued, "At AU, I can tailor experiences for them in the grad RD position, with supervision, support, and high expectations. I do the same for my mid-level staff."