



JMU Residence Life

Placement Description

The department handles operations related to residence life, university housing, first year programs, and graduate level instruction

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Assistance with departmental/instructional research
- Development and presentation of residential programs (e.g.: substance abuse, human relation skills, academic skills, career development, etc.)
- Assist with functions related to residence life administration
- Development and presentation of programs related to first year transition to college
- Development and presentation of programs related to second year transition from college
- Development and presentation of outreach programs designed to create liaison relationship between residential students and university support services (e.g. Career Services, Counseling and Student Development, working in the housing area.)
- Assist with advising student community advisory board

Other Notes

Opportunities include working in the First Year Involvement Center, working in the Area Office, working in the Housing area.

Contact Information

- Contact Person: Tripp Purks
- Address: C103 Huffman Hall
- MSC 2401 James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA 22807
- Telephone: 540/568- 2882
- Fax: 540/568-6280



- E-Mail: purksme@jmu.edu
- Website: <http://www.jmu.edu/orl/>

Read about students' experiences at this site below:

Spring 2022 - Kasee Sosa

JMU's Office of Residence Life (ORL) strives to create a caring environment that cultivates academic success, personal growth, respect, and commitment to the JMU community. Within ORL, there are many departments, one of them being the Student Learning Initiatives Resource Center (SLI). SLI is committed to creating an environment where students can find academic support and help with any struggles that can come with transitioning to college life. The resource center also provides a creative planning space for all the programs that take place in the residence halls. These programs tend to be focused on educational experiences and community building activities within the residence halls. In order to do this, ORL follows the community engagement model which is a framework that prioritizes student learning in residential experiences. The three main goals of this model is cultivating self-awareness, building relationships, and engaging with the community. SLI provides academic intervention programs such as the Academic Support Instruction (ASI) program and the Academic Mentor Program (AMP) for students that need additional academic assistance.

While working at SLI, a majority of my time was dedicated to AMP. AMP is an academic intervention program for second semester first-year students that are on academic probation. The severity of the academic probation determines whether these students are required to participate in AMP to remain enrolled at JMU or if they can voluntarily participate to gain some academic support. I handled all the administrative work for AMP. This included assigning first-year students to upperclassmen mentors, keeping track of all interaction between mentors and mentees, removing first-years from AMP if they did not engage with the program after multiple contact attempts, facilitating mid-semester check-ins with all mentors, co-facilitating a final meeting with all the mentors, and helping my supervisor decide if each mentor would receive the full stipend for their work this semester. My supervisor, Tripp Purks, works very closely with AMP so he provided me with a lot of support while taking on this workload. On top of handling all the administrative work for AMP, I was also a mentor. Through this semester, I met with 4-8 mentees depending on their level of engagement. While meeting with my mentees, we set goals for the semester, went over campus resources available to them based on their personal needs, and had them take the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) when first meeting to assess their academic strengths and weaknesses. I was also tasked with contacting other universities in Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, and New Jersey to inquire about their protocols for dorm room changes mid-semester or mid-school year. ORL did not have any protocols in place for situations like these. I received responses from a few universities that I was in contact with them via email and Zoom.

I really enjoyed my time working in SLI and working with Mr. Purks. I learned a lot about myself and the things that I am interested in. Mr. Purks was an amazing supervisor that



always made me feel supported and took a genuine interest in my life as a student and his intern. I was given a lot of independence at my placement when given tasks. That being said, I never felt alone and knew I could go to Mr. Purks if I had any questions or needed clarification. Mr. Purks also did a great job of catering to my needs in terms of supervision. He understood my supervision style well and was very accommodating. The environment of SLI itself is very welcoming and casual which made me feel more comfortable coming in as a new person for only one semester. All of the staff and student employees were very friendly which created a great working environment for me. One struggle with this is that there was sometimes a lot of traffic in the resource center, making it a little difficult to get work done some days. However, I was allowed to work with headphones which help tremendously sometimes.

For the past few years, I have been very interested in entering the field of student affairs and higher education administration. Working in SLI taught me that I thoroughly enjoy working in student affairs and that that was the career I wanted to pursue. Being at this placement taught me a lot of skills needed to be successful in student affairs such as organization, working with college aged students, communicating with strangers, etc. Because I worked with AMP so much, I learned a lot about working specifically with students that needed academic support. Not only was this a great way to develop leadership skills, but I feel like I also learned a lot about myself academically and became more aware of the problems that college students face that I might not have been very familiar with because of my personal experiences. I had a very diverse group of mentees which was great for my exposure to marginalized groups of college students and understanding how university student services applied to them. I eventually want to work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) so this was a really great experience for me because those are types of students that I hope to one day work with in the future. I also learned a lot about what it was like to work with other professionals. Not to say that the work environment was extremely formal but it was interesting to see what people that work in the field I am interested in do on a day-to-day basis at their job.

A lot of Psychology classes that focused on humans as social beings and cultural awareness helped me a lot at my sight. Because one of my main roles was working with other college students, it is important to be able to understand them as individuals with a plethora of complex social identities, as well as how those identities interact with one another in society. A few of my Psychology classes like Social Psychology and Psychology of Women and Gender fostered a lot of social and cultural awareness that was extremely beneficial at my sight.

For my contribution project, I chose to focus on student leadership development. It occurred to me that the mentor in AMP might have not felt fully prepared for their student leadership role. It is important to consider that not all students have the same background in leadership. For this reason, I chose to focus on assessments that would cultivate self-awareness of one's own leadership skills by asking questions about their abilities. I used inventories such as the Student Leadership Practices Inventory and the Emotionally Intelligent Leadership Inventory, both of which are a type of self-assessment. My materials for this consisted of the inventories themselves as well as reflection questions for mentors to fill out prior to their training. Once at the training, the reflection questions will foster discussion amongst the mentors and cultivate



self-awareness about their leadership strengths and weaknesses that they can work to enhance during their role as a mentor.

Fall 2021 - Sarah Shelton

The Office of Residence Life at James Madison University has a mission to be “committed to designing and maintaining a caring environment that encourages academic success, respect, personal growth and responsibility to one’s community”. This is carried out through the community engagement model, which has three main goals: 1) cultivating self-awareness, 2) building relationships, and 3) engaging in community. These three goals are at the forefront of every decision that the Office of Residence Life makes. For the purposes of this field placement, I worked in the Student Learning Initiatives department of the Office of Residence Life (ORL). This department’s goals include leadership development, academic support, and college transition adjustments.

During my time working with the Office of Residence Life, I worked closely with two programs: the Academic Support Instruction program (ASI) and the Academic Mentor Program (AMP). The Academic Support Instruction Program’s main goal is to meet with students who request help in a specific area, such as improving in study habits. Through this program we would have the incoming students take the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) to assess what areas the student may need to improve in. The LASSI assesses categories such as time management, test anxiety, concentration, motivation, self-testing ability, and several others. At the beginning of the semester, I created a PowerPoint of all the categories that the LASSI assesses and provided resources for each, so that it could be used for meetings with students. When students contacted the office, my job was to arrange a time to meet with these students to assess their LASSI score, talk with them about the areas that they wanted to improve in, and look at the resources in the PowerPoint I created. At the end of these meetings, I would have students create take-aways so that they had something specific to carry with them that they wanted to change. After the meetings, I would create a report for them about what we had talked about in the meetings, as well as provide them with additional resources that they could utilize that were tailored specifically to them.

The Academic Mentor Program is designed specifically for first year, second semester students who are on academic probation or are heading in that direction. The AMP program provides mentors who meet with these students, known as mentees, to help them grow in several areas including, study strategies, goal setting, and peer connections. Throughout the semester I did a variety of activities related to the AMP program. Towards the beginning of the semester, I worked with my supervisor, Tripp Purks, to create a schedule of things that needed to happen to have the program start on time at the beginning of the Spring Semester. These tasks included promotion and advertising of the program, interviewing applicants, and revising training. We worked on each of these components to have everything set up for the start of training mentors in January. I was able to take part in each of the tasks and take on some responsibilities such as promotion and advertisement on my own, and for others, such as applicant interviews and revising training, I was able to work closely with my supervisor.



I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Office of Residence Life and working with my supervisor. Being a part of both the ASI and AMP programs helped me to develop many new skills. Some of the skills that I learned during my time at ORL include learning what it looks like to find resources based on student need, actively listening, and helping students to uncover areas that they may be struggling academically, even if they cannot identify them specifically when they walk in. I also learned skills related to enhancing my communication skills and learning what it looks like to work with other professionals and how to communicate with them. I enjoyed getting to work with students and help them grow. It was always encouraging to me when students walked away from our meetings and did not seem as discouraged as when they walked in. I also learned a lot about interview skills, because I was a part of the interview process for the AMP program. I was able to discuss with my supervisor what a red flag would look like in an interview, and what it would look like to have an outstanding interviewee. This site is very specific to being in an office and does not require any outside travel, however, the environment is very inviting and makes the work fun. There are also other students working in the office including graduate assistants, and undergraduate students called Program Advisors who help the RAs with their activities. Working in an environment with other students was so much fun, and I developed several good friends there through the course of my work. I also enjoyed getting to work on different projects every day and attend to what needed my attention the most based on the day I was there.

My career goal is to be a school counselor, so this site highly influenced my career goals. Working with students and helping them better themselves through the ASI program re-affirmed my desire to do that with younger students as a profession. Being a part of this program gave me a glimpse of what it is like to be a real counselor, and I thoroughly enjoyed that specific part of my experience. There are also several psychology classes that helped me be successful at my site including psychology of learning and counseling psychology. Counseling psychology helped me ask better questions to the root of what a student might be trying to get across. Psychology of learning helped me talk with students about how to learn from their experiences, and what types of reinforcement might be helpful when it comes to studying. Both classes made an impact on me, and I am so glad that I got to use them in helping others.

My contribution project for the site was to enhance the AMP program by adding a section of cultivating self-awareness to further align itself with the community engagement model. Although I saw many aspects of relationship-building and community engagement within the program, I thought that the area of self-awareness was lacking. Through consulting with my supervisor, we decided to add it into the program. In my paper I discussed what self-awareness is, why it is important, and how to build it. I then used that information to create an infographic that included what self-awareness was, and provided discussion questions for mentors to go through with mentees and a guide for mentors to look through resources that could aid the discussion. The goal would be for students to gain more awareness surrounding their values and how that can affect goal making, and to be an aid to deciding how they want to carryout their college career. Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed creating my contribution project and my time at the Office of Residence Life, and am thankful for the experience that it gave me and the skills that it helped me to cultivate as I move into my professional life.



Fall 2020 – Caitlin O’Hanlon

James Madison University’s Office of Residence Life’s mission is to support a student’s transition to the JMU community, while helping with academic achievement, providing positive learning experiences, and providing excellent service. The Office of Residence Life (ORL) strives to connect their own mission to JMU’s mission, as well to the Student Affairs’ mission at JMU in order to provide a holistic experience for their students. Within the Office of Residence Life, there are a few departments, one of them being the department of Student Learning Initiatives. The mission of the Student Learning Initiative is surrounded around creating educational experiences within the residence hall. This is established by the development of the sustainable community engagement model and the residential curriculum. The residential curriculum builds on the objectives of cultivating self-awareness among the residents, allowing residents to develop meaningful relationships with others, and help them engage with their community. With each of those objectives, there are clear ways that the department expects them to be carried out, and there are measurable outcomes to ensure that the objectives are achieved. One of the main services at the Office of Residence Life that aligns with their mission is the Academic Mentor Program. My supervisor, Tripp Purks, is the Assistant Director of Student Learning Initiatives and is the coordinator of this program. The Academic Mentor Program is a service for second-semester first year students who are struggling academically. First years on academic probation are paired with a trained upperclassman to work towards being academically successful. These pairs meet throughout the spring semester to effectively work on a wide range of aspects the first-year student may be struggling with.

My experience at this site has been filled opportunities to step out of my comfort zone. Being in the unusual circumstances that we are in, the beginning of my time at the Office of Residence Life was filled with talking with students in quarantine and isolation on campus and updating datasheets for the office. I also was tasked with contacting other universities to see what programs and events they were holding to maintain their same atmosphere in a virtual world. Towards the end of my time in the office, though, my experience started gearing itself solely towards working on aspects of the Academic Mentor Program. I was given the opportunity to create an application for individuals who were thinking about becoming mentors, and I was also tasked with making interview questions for those applicants. Working at this site allowed me to be on the other side of interviews for a change and let me have a hand in the program before it truly started. Another part of this program I was able to work on was the beginning portions of training planning for the mentors. Working on these introductory factors of the program and planning process, I came up with the idea for my contribution project. My contribution project focused on adapting the Academic Peer Mentor program to be one that works towards helping first years overcome not only academic challenges, but mental, social, emotional, and environmental challenges. It is important for mentors and academic programs like this one to be aware that challenges outside of academics may play a role in decline of academic success. With this, I thought it would be a good idea to provide materials that mentors would utilize if the program shaped into a more holistic program. I created worksheets on topics such as anxiety,



time management, and getting to know the campus that mentors would be able to talk through and discuss further with their mentees if it was discovered that that was something the first year was struggling with. It can be hard for mentors to know how to handle certain situations, so it's important to give them materials to guide them along the way.

Overall, working at this site this semester has taught me so much. Mr. Purks is an amazing supervisor, especially in a time where there is not too much certainty about what to do or what will be coming next. At the Office of Residence Life, I was given freedom but did not once feel that I was left without any guidance or was thrown into something I could not handle. I was not given specific tasks to do but was given a general idea of what was expected of me in a time period, and I could go to Mr. Purks with any and all questions I had. The only limitation that came from this site was the uncertainty of what would come next, but that is to be expected in a time where we are going through something we have never experienced before. Being at this site has taught me that it is okay to not have a strict and rigid schedule and task list. I have also learned that I like interaction in a workplace, especially with the people I am serving. Unfortunately, this semester, I was not able to experience that very much at the Office of Residence Life, but I am glad I was given the opportunity to be in a setting where that was not the case so that I could learn that about myself. Working at this site taught me that even though Student Affairs may not be the direction I want to go towards when it comes to my career, I am considering working towards being a counselor for the college-aged population.

My experience at the Office of Residence allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and change my perspective on how work and work environments have to be. I was also given the chance to see the school-perspective, rather than the student perspective, of a service I feel that I should know so much about, but now know I didn't know anything. I would recommend this site to someone looking for a placement, even if they don't feel that they want to pursue Student Affairs. This site really offers you a change to look at things from a different light, and I am incredibly thankful that I was placed here.

Spring 2020 – Daniel George

The mission and services of this site are manifold, as in this specific position, you are tied to multiple initiatives and play many roles. In one aspect, you are working within a division of JMU's Office of Residence Life (ORL), and the values that it holds central to its mission are supporting student transition to the JMU community, fostering academic achievement, providing positive learning experiences, providing excellent service and accommodations. Specifically, you are in a branch of ORL called Student Learning Initiatives. The values and services of SLI revolve around offering resources for student transitions and academic support. Then, most of the work you will do in this branch will be for a specific program it has, the Academic Mentor Program (AMP), and the mission of this is to mentor, support, and coach students with any useful information needed to succeed academically. Other than this program, you may have some



other involvements within SLI, like with their Clothesline Project, but I did not get to see that as Covid-19 disruptions cancelled this event.

This site offers many opportunities and experiences for your involvement, all of which are ways for you to contribute and grow/develop professionally. Much of the work is set at your pace, which I found very rewarding. I got to have a hand in data management, organization, logistics, facilitation for groups and individual dialogue, mentorship, and administration. You get to become very involved and your perspective is valued. Some days you have certain tasks to do, although most of the bigger tasks to be done were handed to me and I would have about a week or week and a half to do them. The work you do and tasks you perform are enough to feel productive and meaningful, but not overwhelming. Your presence is a support to the professionals in the office, and your efforts are appreciated. If you ever desire feedback, then you can just ask and it will be given to you.

My impressions of the site were always high. From the day I interviewed, I felt very welcome and the space was very inviting and inclusive. The student workers at the site were always amicable and kind, and eventually made for some fun work companions for late evenings that I would find myself still working in the office. This was largely because I prefer a slower working pace over a longer period of time; I could have left at any time. The supervision was caring, straightforward, approachable, responsible, trustworthy, kind, respectful, and gracious. All of the staff, students, grad assistants, and professionals, were a pleasure to work with and learn from. You will understand a comprehensive amount of university systems and how student affairs works through this job and meet a lot of people who are closely involved with university systems.

What I have grown to enjoy most about working here is the pleasant atmosphere and all that I've been able to learn. The work is enjoyable and meaningful. It's difficult to quite articulate the exact advantages and positives of working here, but this placement for me perfectly matched a nice day in spring. As far as limitations go, there are not really any apparent ones that I can think of. Many of the most relevant elements of this site are very flexible to your preferences. If you want closer supervision, you can ask for it and get it. If you change your mind and want tighter or more frequent supervision needs, you can get that, too by asking. If you want to change your hours, you can do that. If you want to work from out of office, you can do that as well; I just suggest going to the office because you get more out of something the more you put into it.

I learned a great deal about interpersonal communication, emotional competence, hard conversation facilitation, university systems, and student advocacy. This was fairly formative for my decision on career pursuit, but I had already pretty much made up my mind to pursue higher education administration. This placement was very informative and advantageous in diversifying



my experiences on a resume and allowing me to talk about experience facilitating difficult conversations with students on academic probation. You also learn engagement tactics and be a part of crucial dialogue around motivation and educational psychology.

My contribution project idea was to add a facilitation guide on career and personal goal plans for the mentors to engage with their mentees on. This was to potentially extend the period of formally scripted dialogue in the curriculum for the AMP mentors. The goal was to instill motivation to the mentees to work hard, acquire the tips and values we were trying to teach them for academic and professional success at JMU, and for them to keep their future in mind. This structured exploration activity would hopefully also illuminate for them other potential opportunities or advantages that they could pursue while here, to boost their GPA and add to their resumes. By doing some research I found general support for mentorship programs and for building up motivation in students to have some sort of intrinsic factor in them motivating them to improve and move forward. Also, in my experience of personally interacting with several mentees, realizing steps to take to move forward and learning about potentially developmental experiences that they previously did not know about was expressed by them to be extremely helpful.

I have enjoyed this placement and it has been very developmental for me. If you are at all curious about student affairs, academic affairs, or something related to the field of health and human resources and/or advocacy, this is a very strong choice for a field placement. You gain experience in thinking about systems and learning from professionals, while also practicing emotional intelligence and the art of difficult conversations, which are invaluable skills when working with people.

Spring 2019 – Lindsay Willard

During the spring 2019 semester, I had the opportunity to intern for the Office of Residence Life in the Student Learning Initiatives (SLI) office. Their mission statement states, “The Office of Residence Life at James Madison University is committed to designing and maintaining a caring environment that encourages academic success, respect, personal growth and responsibility to one's community.” The SLI office is a place for students to find academic support as well as help with any transition to college issues. SLI offers several various academic support programs throughout the year designed to help students succeed. As an intern, I had the opportunity to help facilitate some of the academic programs offered.

One of my main responsibilities as an intern was helping with the Academic Mentor Program (AMP). This program is designed for first year students on academic probation to work with trained upper-class student academic mentors. Mentors identify the needs of each student they work with and develop a success plan accordingly. At the beginning of the semester, I had the opportunity to co-facilitate the AMP training and served in a supervisory role to all mentors.



In my supervisory role, it was my responsibility to help keep track of the amount of meetings each mentor had with their meeting. I also had check-in meetings with them throughout the semester to answer any questions and address any concerns they had. In addition to working in a supervisory role, I also served as an academic mentor to five first year students. I met with these students almost every week, helped identify their specific needs and ways in which I could help them. Each meeting, we focused on topics such as study skills, communicating with professors, time management, setting academic/personal goals, etc. I provided support, encouragement and useful information throughout the semester to each of my mentees in order to help them thrive and succeed academically. Serving as an academic mentor was my favorite part of this placement. Watching my mentees grow throughout the semester and succeed in their academics was a truly rewarding experience to witness.

In addition to the Academic Mentor Program, I also co-facilitated the academic program, First years Obtaining Useful and Creative Study Skills (F.O.C.U.S.2). This program is another great resource to help students succeed academically during their first year at JMU. Sessions meet for 2 hours during a two week time frame. I co-facilitated the course with a SLI student employee. Throughout the program, we taught students useful information such as setting goals, staying motivated, learning styles, note taking, test taking strategies and study skills. Teaching this course pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me practice my facilitation skills.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time working at SLI. My supervisor, Tripp Purks, was extremely encouraging, intentional and helpful. During my first day of work, I had mentioned to Tripp that I was interested in pursuing a career in Student Affairs and was passionate about helping students succeed in college. After hearing this, Tripp intentionally allowed me to embrace myself in certain roles in SLI where I had the opportunity to work directly with students. This placement further confirmed my interest in working in Student Affairs in the future.

My experience interning at SLI allowed me to step out of my comfort zone, expand my leadership skills, discover my passions, enhance my presentation skills and work in a professional atmosphere. The entire SLI staff is extremely welcoming, caring and passionate about helping students succeed. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve under their inspiring leadership. I would highly recommend this placement to any student looking for an opportunity to step out of their comfort zone, enhance their leadership abilities and expand their communication skills. I am beyond thankful for my placement at SLI and for giving me such an incredible final semester at JMU.

Spring 2018 - Samantha Horton

This semester, I had the opportunity to work for the Office of Residence Life in the First Year Involvement Center (FYI). The Office of Residence Life's mission statement states that they are "committed to designing and maintaining a caring environment that encourages academic success, respect, personal growth and responsibility to one's community". When specifically talking about the purpose of the First Year Involvement Center, it is to provide



academic support for students and programming and bulletin board resources for residence hall staffs, as well as help students with “transitional issues”.

One of my main responsibilities in FYI was to create, review, and organize programs in the programming resources binder for resident advisers (RA’s) and hall detectors (HD’s) to use in their residence halls. The programs facilitated by HD’s and RA’s address multicultural, academic, alcohol and drug awareness, community, sexual misconduct, safety and security, and professional development topics. For FYI, there is a resource binder that RA’s and HD’s can use to access these premade programs. The resource binder is organized by topic, which include a printable sheet that states supplies needed, the purpose of the program, and the five aspects of the growth programming model: intro, check-in, learn, grow, and reflection. Through this task, I was able to have interactions with fellow RA’s and Programming Assistants (PA’s). It helped me learn more about how to collaborate with other effectively and forced me to research topics more in depth.

As a part of my time in FYI, I worked as a coordinator for the Clothesline Project. The Clothesline Project brings awareness to sexual assault on campus during the first week in April as a part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Individuals who have been affected by sexual assault (either as a primary or secondary survivor) decorate a shirt in order to share their story. All of the shirts are then put on display in Madison Union on rotation over the course of three days. In total, the project now has over a thousand shirts in its inventory. As a part of this project, we had meetings with The Well to go over logistics and marketing efforts. I also facilitated two volunteer training sessions. These training sessions were made up of various students and faculty across campus who volunteered to help with this event (as a greeter, floater, or sticker distributor). The training session included educating the volunteers about correct terminology (like what it means to be a survivor versus a victim for example), as well as what they can and cannot do to help someone in distress or who has been triggered by the event. I worked with another PA for these hour long sessions. Two weeks before the volunteer training started, we (two PA’s, the Graduate Assistant, and I) went through the PowerPoint that goes along with these training sessions to make sure all of the information was correct and was styled correctly. During set up, we arranged shirts by sizes and then hung them up on hangers, with clothespins, or pushpins (depending on the display base). We also hung up information around the room about the display (like the meaning of the gong, bell and whistle, and the “NO More” campaign posters). I then worked a total of three hour-long shifts as a greeter throughout the duration of the project. My responsibilities included setting up the outside table, stamping passports, answering questions, and directing volunteers as necessary. I also helped rotate shirts as needed so that all shirts were seen. Once the event was finished, I helped take down the display, organize the materials, and fold the shirts so that they fit in the boxes. It was an eye opening experience that helped me learn how to work with a time limit and coordinate an event from start to finish.

The last big event that I worked on was the end of the year Recognition Celebration (Rec Cel). The purpose of Rec Cel is to celebrate all of the hard work and accomplishments of the RA’s and HD’s throughout the past year. Awards are also given to individual RA’s or HD’s for an exceptional program they hosted/created, a bulletin board they made, or for being an overall outstanding new or returning RA. My main role was purchasing and creating the centerpieces for



the tables. I was partnered with a Program Assistant (PA) in the office to accomplish this. This involved running errands and using a DPO, as well as painting jars and cutting fake flowers. On the day of the event, I helped set up the festival ballroom. This included assembling the photo booth with decorations, hanging up superlatives, placing centerpieces in the right place (on the correct table with the correct pictures), and organizing the awards to fit the script order. I was also tasked with presenting/recognizing the Clothesline Project and giving out a reward to an HD who hosted an exceptional Sexual Misconduct program in her hall. After the event concluded, I assisted with the take-down process of the event. This event built on the Clothesline Project because I was able to work with this project from start to finish.

Overall, this field placement was an amazing experience. The staff was incredibly helpful and my supervisor (Carson) really tailored the experience to fit my interests. Carson was a hands off supervisor and let me choose the order in which I tackled the programs (by topic). This forced me to research various resources around campus and online, as well as learn more about the programming topics as a whole (like substance abuse). I was in charge of my own hours and only worked in the office for six hours a week. For the rest, I had to practice self-motivation in order to get the remaining four hours (minimum) of work done. By performing this research and by talking to other RA's, I was able to gain confidence in the programs I created and build relationships with staff members. Most importantly, I was also able to gain experience with programming, coordinating events (especially in a college setting), presenting, and working on a team. These were valuable skills that helped me be prepared for graduate school/assistantship interviews and my internship this summer. It was also incredibly rewarding to help create programs and provide research for the possible implementation of mental health programs in residential halls next year. Carson really encouraged me to work on this idea which ultimately became my contribution project. The only downside was that I did not get a lot of one-on-one student interactions. However, I chose the path of strictly working on programs. By working at this site, my choice to pursue a career in higher education was supported. I feel more prepared to work in a higher education setting and believe that my experience at FYI gave me a great taste of what my future will look like.

Fall 2016 – Rachel Collins

Throughout the fall semester of 2016, I completed 150 hours of field placement at the Office of Residence Life. ORL provides many resources for first year students to encourage active participation and involvement in the JMU community. ORL strives to provide extensive opportunities for students to become involved early in their college experience. The belief is that involvement from early on will mold involved and well-rounded students who are eager to participate and contribute to the JMU community. Active participation and contribution also contributes to students' willingness to learn and become active in academics and, eventually, society as a whole. This belief helps to describe the foundation of ORL's services, which are rooted in values including a supportive transition to the JMU community, academic achievement, providing positive learning experiences, and providing excellent service and accommodations. The services provided by the Office of Residence Life strive to encourage students to become



actively involved in many different aspects of their own education. ORL states on their website that they recognize their greatest contribution to campus and students' education is encouraging them to actively become involved and engaged in university life in order to create and maintain a learning-centered community. The Office of Residence Life states that they are "committed to designing and maintaining a caring environment that encourages academic success, respect, personal growth and responsibility to one's community."

These goals and missions contribute to the variety of services provided by ORL in order to encourage student involvement and success. The Office of Residence Life as a whole provides many services to students. This semester marked the beginning of a new program implementation. The program was called the Niche and was designed to be a first-year resource center that was more centralized to first-year students. The Niche was located in Frederickson Hall in the village. Program assistants and myself were asked to staff the Niche during operating hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from 4-7pm. The Niche was brand new, so I was able to witness and participate in the early stages of creating a student involvement program. This provided me with an interesting perspective of university services and how they are created from the beginning. It began with outlining a mission statement of the Niche so that students could easily understand the importance of the program and why it was developed. The mission statement of the Niche is "to centralize a network of support services and programs that address academic, personal, and social need of new students and promote student success, to actively promote positive student engagement with the university campus and culture, to work collaboratively with faculty and staff across the campus to provide additional resources for new students, and to offer services and necessary interventions to students who are experiences academic and social difficulties." The hope was that students would be more likely to come and ask questions and seek involvement from peers. ORL planned to provide guidance and information about other programs on campus that students would be interested in. The Niche had some difficulties getting started, as many new ideas do, about which I was able to provide input and work to solve these issues. For example, the Niche name was developed alongside a tag line that described the area as *a space to find your place*. This encompassed the Niche's services that hoped to help students with academic, social, and involvement difficulties. However, another campus office had a very similar tag line to the Niche and we were unable to move forward with it. This hindered advertising, branding, and understanding of the space. The student employees and myself worked to solve issues like these that come with a new program being introduced on campus. Interest and understanding of the services of the space introduced problems that we worked to solve through a strong social media presence and partnership with other offices and programs on campus. Responsibilities I had as a part of working to develop the Niche included brainstorming and problem solving working to fix problems that arose with the development of the Niche, communication with campus partners in order to spread the word about our services, helping to maintain the Niche's social media, staffing the Niche, weekly progress meetings, and other activities such as making posters and developing the technology and décor in the space. Since the development of the Niche, the vision has changed slightly to adapt to the needs of first-year students and may even include a name change as we progress into next semester. Work



on this program has been exciting and interesting, as I have gained a new perspective on developing university programs and some of the “red tape,” so to speak, around developing student services.

Another ORL service that I had a hand in working on this semester was the F.O.C.U.S. Program. F.O.C.U.S. is an academic resource for first-year students to opt-into if they feel they may be struggling academically. The program is a five-week course that covers various topics related to academic success in college. I was able to participate in facilitating the course to students; this was by far my favorite aspect of my internship. I was able to work directly with first-year students and discuss the importance of and tips to reach academic success in college classes. The students were overall very eager to learn and would often stay after our classes to discuss other aspects of school and academics. Some students would even email me to get coffee or have meetings if they needed further support. The mentoring aspect of this program was very rewarding and I was able to work directly with first-year students in order to help them towards success in college.

Overall, my work with ORL was very rewarding and allowed me to develop as a professional. Moving forward, I intend to go to graduate school to study clinical or counseling psychology. My field placement at ORL helped me to gain hand-on experience working with professionals on a college campus and first-year college students during a difficult transition in their lives. If I could change anything about my ORL experience, I would have liked to have participated in mentoring students more. F.O.C.U.S. did not start until halfway through the semester, so the first half was mostly working with ORL professional and student staff. This was still a valuable experience that allowed me to develop my skills as a professional in a office and collaborative setting. I would highly recommend the Office of Residence Life as a field placement site to students who are interested in another perspective on academia and involvement in college from a university office perspective and to students who are interested in higher education and college counseling.

Spring 2015 – Victoria Salyers

The mission of the Office of Residence Life is to foster an environment that is caring and encourages academic success as well as personal growth and one’s responsibility to their community. In the First Year Involvement Center (FYI), the mission of ORL is carried out in a more specific way. The FYI Center is in part present to assist with the needs of the Resident Advisors (RA). The RAs come to the FYI center to create programs and boards that can help their first year residents learn and be reminded of subjects from health to academics. These boards and programs help the first year students learn what the JMU community is all about.

One of my experiences in the FYI office included being an academic mentor to first year students that were on probation from their first semester. Subjects we went over were things such as: time management, note taking, talking to professors, and effectively balancing a social life.



The mentors were also provided with a GPA calculator that we could show the mentees so that they could continuously keep up with their grades to make sure that their GPA was enough to stay at JMU. The mentors and mentees decided when they would meet on their own time. Meetings with mentees could include going to get dinner, having a coffee, or even having a study date.

In addition to being a mentor, I helped facilitate and plan the Clothesline Project (CLP). This Project is a demonstration of t-shirts that are hung by a makeshift clothesline. The individuals that are survivors of intimate partner violence as well as the friends and families of victims come to tell their stories on these shirts. The event is very sensitive. People not only come to tell their own stories, but people come from all over Harrisonburg to view the stories on these shirts. Two of the main jobs that I had while helping with CLP were to research new statistics and give volunteer training sessions. The researching of new statistics for intimate partner violence was interestingly difficult. Many statistics that I came across were outdated. The statistics that I found would be turned into part of the volunteer slideshow that I made. I also researched a new informational video for the volunteers about how the event would run. There were two volunteer training sessions that I presented in order to train the volunteers on their job descriptions, as well as give them an explanation of how the event would be put on. Once the larger tasks were done with the project, new posters had to be made with statistics that would be displayed around the event. There were also many other decisions made by the CLP team that I was privileged enough to be able to give my opinion about and help with.

Other tasks that I had while doing my hours included logging my communication with my mentees, helping my coworkers with their projects, as well as my supervisor. When I would arrive at the office most days, logging my communication with my mentees was one of the first things I would do. Every meeting, text, or email would have to be put onto my Qualtrics survey that is analyzed at the end of the semester. Every Program Advisor (PA) in the office is given an event that they organize at some point within the year. Most of the time, there was at least one program being organized. If I ever had down time in assignments that were necessary for CLP, I would offer my help with whatever they needed me to.

Having my placement at the Office of Residence Life in the FYI center was one of the best placements I could have received. It gave me experiences in the JMU community that I would have not otherwise had the opportunity to have. The atmosphere in FYI made it so that I never dreaded going to spend five or more hours at a time there. It also gave me an insider's view about what being in residence life is like- there is much more to it than one would think! An advantage of being placed here would be that it is a very good resource for just about anything. At FYI and ORL they know just about everything that is going on around campus all the time and I also got to be "in the know".

My time at FYI has helped me to improve my communication skills as well as my determination. The improvement in my determination came a lot from working with my mentees. I had mentees that loved communicating with me and others that challenged me in getting through to them. With the mentees that challenged me, I had to be determined to help them. Being a mentor has also expanded my leadership skills. I have had previous experiences with being a leader, but being a mentor was a rare type of leadership. Not only do the mentees



look to their mentor for guidance in academics, but also in balancing their personal lives. Being a mentor gave me experience in being a special kind of leader. FYI did not just improve my communication skills by replying to emails and texting my mentees, but it has helped me with face to face interaction. Every day when I was in the office, various RAs would come in for their programs and I would have to get used to interacting with people that I did not know. Having different interactions with all of the PAs, RAs, and all other people in the different wings of ORL have certainly expanded my communication skills.

The experiences I have had at FYI have made me question where I would like to be in the future. I do not find my confusion a bad thing because having my placement at FYI has made me realize that I do like to be around the professional college atmosphere. I plan to go to graduate school, but am still unsure about what I would like to do with a master's degree. However, my placement has made me think that I would like to go more on the route of being a professor. I enjoy being around academics and doing research while in the presence of the energy of the students. I am very thankful for my experience at FYI and for giving me a great support system while making important life decisions in my last semester at JMU.

Meghan Ward

The Office of Residence Life's mission is to design and maintain a caring environment that encourages academic success, respect, personal growth and responsibility to one's community. The First Year Involvement (FYI) Center furthers the ORL mission while encouraging a positive college experience. One of the main services offered at my site is to provide the resources necessary for resident advisors and hall directors to successfully run programs with JMU on-campus residents. Along with this, FYI interacts with students one on one through their writing center. Designed specifically to help first years, the writing center's goal is to promote growth in a learning environment while facilitating the assistance needed to help students succeed academically.

During my experience at I was to assist students through a large majority of the services and programs that FYI offers them. One of my main duties within FYI was to co-facilitate "Grad Club," a freshman seminar course that strived to provide the skills and tools necessary for freshman to succeed through their first semester of college. Co-facilitating allowed me to help students develop better time management, note taking, goal setting and test taking skills in a once a week class, for five weeks.

Another position I held while in FYI was the vendor coordinator position for FYI's Brick Wall Project, a campus wide alcohol awareness program that creates a brick wall through having students write their positive and negative experiences with alcohol on a gray or red paper brick. As vendor coordinator, I contacted and met with local vendors throughout Harrisonburg to entice them to donate prizes for the event. Their prizes created a gift basket that was given to the resident advisor that best advertised the event. During the week of the Brick Wall Project, I advertised the event, while having students help contribute to the wall by writing their anonymous personal experiences with alcohol, to display in Warren Hall to help raise awareness.



Smaller duties that I had throughout the course of the semester included more office work related tasks such as researching information about learning communities for the head of Office of Residence Life, and entering the pre and post test scores for Graduation Club assessment. I also assisted my supervisor in creating activities for a leadership workshop called SHAPE that occurred bi-weekly for the hall presidents.

Overall, I enjoyed my time at the First Year Involvement Center. Working here allowed me to get a firmer grasp about what the first year experience was about. Through this experience I was able to work with a more specific demographic within student affairs, that is on-campus first year residents. One of the major advantages of the site is that I was able to participate in and observe a lot of different programs and resources offered within the Office of Residence Life. My experience was most certainly a diverse one, and allowed me to interact with students in both a campus wide and one on one type atmosphere.

Through my experience at FYI and my active participation in Grad Club, Brick Wall and SHAPE meetings, I further improved my facilitation and communication skills within a student affairs context. I became proficient in mastering the delicate balance of being both professional and personable to students and university officials. Also, through my work at FYI, I was able to actively assist in the assessment process from a university program. I especially enjoyed comparing and contrasting assessment within the psychology department and how assessment occurs in student affairs. Witnessing and being actively involved in the pre and post assessment data of Grad Club, was both an educational and influential experience.

Overall, my experience in the Office of Residence Life's First Year Involvement Center has further solidified my decision to pursue both a graduate school education and future career in student affairs. Furthermore, my experience has reinforced my decision to pursue a student affairs program where I can both personally and academically influence students. Working with students and ORL staff at FYI made me helped solidify my belief that college is a one of a kind environment and college students are one of the kind people. Perusing a future where I can be actively involved in students' development and overall college experience is something that I am passionate about, and I am grateful for my experience at FYI for helping me realize this.