



Westville Residents Assistants at their training.

Department of Student Residence Affairs - Westville Campus - 2023 Residence Assistants Training

BY: .

The office of Residence Life under the Department of Student Residence Affairs (DSRA) at UKZN conducted a week-long training with its Residence Assistants, popularly known as RAs organised by Residence Life Co-ordinator, Ms Lerato Khoali, and her Residence Life Officers. The training programme was rich in content with different institutional stakeholders in attendance, covering a range of strategic matters such as First Aid, RA responsibilities, administration, maintenance, psycho-social and socio-education and security.

RAs undertook Basic First Aid and Evacuation training which is crucial during emergencies. This was followed by an in-depth discussion on vital residence life responsibilities such as residence rules, professionalism (ethics and communication) facilitated by Dr Benson Plaatjies a lecturer at UKZN, and most importantly, programming. DSRA administrators, Ms Sinqobile Mthethwa and Ms Buhle Khulu presented their responsibilities and functions to the new RAs so they would be able to guide and advise students correctly, especially on the channels of communication. The Asset and Building (A&B) officers, represented by Mr Wonder Mtshali, also presented to the RAs on their roles and how residence upkeep matters are communicated.

Given the many psycho-social matters students face in residences, Ms Ronelle Msomi from the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Sciences gave a presentation advising, capacitating and empowering RAs on handling such. RAs were also made aware of how to communicate with student counsellors on matters regarding students' psycho-emotional and socio-academic well-being. Mr Lungani Bengani, an Academic Development Officer within the College of Health Science, was also invited to speak to the importance of having academic-related activities and how

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students can reach them. The Professional Provident Society (PPS) provided RAs with insights into financial management and literacy.

Risk Management Services (RMS) presented on campus security matters. Lastly, the Campus Health Clinic spoke about their services so that first-years are able to access health services on campus.

One of the RAs, Mr Fanele Dlamini, enjoyed the training, saying, 'I was more than happy to attend the training. It prepared me on how to perform RA duties, how to deal with different students and critical situations, and how I am expected to behave in this position. This training showed me how critically important RAs are in residence life, something I took for granted before.'

Ms Thekiso Kineilwe, also an RA, shared Dlamini's sentiments, saying, 'I enjoyed being trained in useful skills such as basic first aid. This training prepared me to be more responsible for others and it has prepared me to look forward to working and assisting different people from diverse backgrounds. Presentations from different stakeholders gave me in-depth insights into how to go about assisting students.'

Residence Life Officer, Mr Aviwe Ntsethe, urged the new RAs to be dedicated, optimistic and courageous in executing their duties. 'It is not easy to accommodate everyone's thoughts and perspectives; however, this training has attempted to do its best to capacitate and mentally empower the RAs with different strategies on how to handle differences that may arise in student residences. This is not a once-off (training). Certainly, more are coming,' he said.

Expressed Khoali, 'Residence Assistants are a resource for residence community focusing on community development, being referral agents and intellectual leaders within residences. In order to achieve their goal, RAs were equipped with information through an intensive training provided by the residence life team and other stakeholders within the University. Our training was interactive and practical as a result communication flowed easily. We received positive feedback from RAs with 85.7% strongly agreeing to the programme being informative and rewarding. We will continue to support them through continuous training, termly evaluation and a mid-year strategy review as every term comes with its own challenges. RAs also were encouraged not to forget their ultimate goal of being at UKZN: their own academic success. Time management is of paramount importance,' said Khoali.

Words: [DSRA Residence Life Office](#)

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