

MANUSCRIPT

"The Grind Don't Stop": Navigating the Culture of Busyness in Residence Life

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THE CULTURE OF BUSYNESS has become a significant barrier to negotiating work/life boundaries for higher ed student affairs professionals. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, this study examined the perceptions of 20 newer residence life professionals to understand how busyness impacts their personal and professional lives. Analysis of data from semi-structured interviews revealed that, as a result of living and working in a culture of busyness, staff felt pressured to live up to both explicit and implicit job expectations and had difficulty negotiating the balance between work and personal life. The findings of this study provide insight into how busyness influences job satisfaction and career motivation and discuss how concerns might be addressed to prevent burnout and attrition.

Conversations about work/life balance have long been a focus for college and university housing and residence life administrators, but in recent years the culture of busyness—and the glorification of that culture in the workplace by leaders and employees alike (Friedlander, 2024)—has created a sense of urgency about understanding how this phenomenon influences employee satisfaction and retention among student affairs professionals. The demands of working with college students and the institutional expectations for student services have created tension for staff as they try to integrate work into their lives in a balanced way. In addition, student affairs administrators have promulgated the notion of ideal worker norms in the field, “which assume work is the employee’s primary, if not the sole, responsibility” (Sallee, 2021, p. 18). To help create more sustainable careers and encourage career persistence for student affairs professionals, it is important to investigate the culture of busyness and address its root causes. It is especially important to understand how this manifests in housing and residence life, an area of student affairs that has long been a focal point for conversations about work/life balance because of the 24/7 nature of working and living with students on campus.

THE CULTURE OF BUSYNESS

The culture of busyness has defined work environments in the United States for decades and remains a persistent characteristic of many modern work environments (Baer, 2017; Bellezza et al., 2017; Holdsworth, 2018;

Pinsker, 2017). The culture of busyness “refers to the pressure society places on individuals to constantly be active and productive, frequently at the price of their relationships and personal well-being” and that “those who aren’t always working . . . are somehow less than or unmotivated” (Kapoor, 2023, para. 6). The nature of busyness is problematic, especially because of our desire to glorify it despite the pitfalls of that mindset (Akbari, 2018; Crenshaw, 2008; Evans, 2014; Kreider, 2012; Love, 2021; Pinsker, 2017; Pritchard, 2014; Rosin, 2014; Waytz, 2023). Creating a work environment that prioritizes busyness can have detrimental effects on staff satisfaction, retention, and well-being. A World Health Organization study (2021) showed that overwork, which these studies specifically call out as a result of busyness culture, can also lead to physical ailments, including increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and death.

IDEAL WORKER NORMS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

The notion of ideal worker norms in college student affairs that Sallee (2021) outlined in *Creating Sustainable Careers in Student Affairs* is at the heart of many of the current challenges facing administrators. Ideal worker norms embody the expectation that workers will participate in maintaining the efficiency and outcomes of the organization—by, for example, being available to work nonstop without any outside responsibilities (Acker, 1990). These norms carry often unachievable (and, more importantly, unhealthy) expectations for student affairs professionals. Working excessive hours, being unable to maintain boundaries between work and personal life, and prioritizing work obligations over family life are all manifestations of this problem (Acker, 1990; Sallee, 2021).

Attempting to live up to these norms can lead to dissatisfaction, work/life conflict, and burnout (Sallee, 2021). In one study, for example, nearly 84% of the participating student affairs professionals acknowledged that stress in their jobs leads to burnout, with a primary emphasis on long work hours as a key contributor (Whitford, 2022). Another study found that 60% of participants left the student affairs field within 10 years or less of starting as new professionals, and more than half indicated that extreme hours lead to burnout, while more than one-third indicated that work/life conflict led to their departure from the field (Marshall et al., 2016).

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK/LIFE BOUNDARIES

The boundaries that individuals create between their work lives and home lives have long been a topic of research in organizational behavior and management. Most individuals segment their lives into distinct *home* and *work* categories—characterized by distinct schedules, distinct groups of people, and differing social habits and behaviors—and assign value to each (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Recognizing that individuals move between work and home frequently, Ashforth (2015) examined the ease and frequency with which individuals transition between roles, noting that successful integration

facilitates the transition between the two domains. Individualized approaches to integrating work and personal life can be classified as four distinct types: integrators, segmentors, separators, and cyclers (Kossek, 2016).

Work/life boundaries are often blurred for student affairs professionals because they place students at the center of their work, which often leads to placing students' needs over their own. In fact, student affairs leadership has a long history of perpetuating the systemic issues by maintaining that long hours are expected—they are simply part of the job (NASPA, 2023). Unfortunately, the conflict between home and work requirements can lead to excessive hours and burnout, which are two of the primary reasons that professionals leave student affairs or higher education altogether (Marshall et al., 2016). These challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created increased work demands, uncertainty about personal wellness, and the reduction or elimination of positions (Winfield & Paris, 2022).

Though many studies have been conducted on work/life balance in student affairs, it is still important to reevaluate how more modern approaches to work and contemporary pressures on employees influence that balance. Understanding how current generations of student affairs professionals—particularly those who live where they work in residence halls—view busyness and work/life balance as critical to persistence and retention.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to seek perspectives from newer residence life professionals about how they viewed busyness in their roles. The study utilized a phenomenological qualitative methodology to answer the central research question: *How does the culture of busyness influence newer (1–5 years) residence life professionals' job experience?* The primary purpose of qualitative research is “understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15), an approach that allows for a richer understanding of the personal experiences of participants in their specific work and personal contexts. Qualitative descriptive methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) informed by Giorgian descriptive phenomenology (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) was utilized in developing the methods for this study.

Descriptive phenomenological research attempts to study a particular phenomenon in the context in which it occurs (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008) and helps researchers “determine the meaning of experience” (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 252). This methodology has the advantage of being able to “highlight the intrinsic, often hidden experiences, which can be so important to each individual experience” (Sinfield et al., 2023, p. 2). Researchers seek individuals with “first-hand experiences” (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008, p. 27) in order to understand and describe the phenomenon in question. The researchers use these rich, first-hand descriptions to capture the meanings that

participants ascribe to the phenomenon in the contexts of their lives. The ultimate goal of descriptive phenomenological research is to "determine the meaning(s) of experience" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 252).

Participants

A total of 20 participants, individuals with 1–5 years of professional experience in residence life, were identified via purposeful sampling (Patton, 2014). Given the abundance of entry-level positions in housing, newer professionals are a crucial subgroup for clarifying perceptions of the work, the culture of the field, and the crucial elements of job satisfaction, retention, and persistence. Participants were recruited through emails distributed to professional network listservs, and recruitment posts were shared on my personal social media accounts and in group pages for professional organizations, including LinkedIn, Twitter/X, and Facebook.

Recruiting participants with diverse racial and ethnic identities was a high priority in gathering the various perspectives about this important topic. In addition, careful attention was paid to the diversity of institution sizes and types that were included in order to acknowledge multiple perspectives that might be influenced by geography, staffing levels, enrollment, and other factors ([Table 1](#)). For the purposes of this study, participants were asked to identify their institution's type (public or private) and size: small (fewer than 5,000 undergraduate students), mid-size (5,000–15,000 undergraduates), or large (more than 15,000 students). Of the 20 participants, seven identified as men, 10 as women, two as non-binary, and one as transgender. A total of nine identified as non-White. Fourteen were in their first professional roles, while the other six were in their second professional position in residence life and housing. The variety of perspectives and lived experiences represented in the sample population created a diverse data set.

Data Collection

I conducted individual interviews with each participant, who responded to semi-structured interview questions focused on how they defined and perceived their busyness, the culture of student affairs work, and their work/life balance. I felt it was important to allow participants to provide their own definitions of busyness, acknowledging that while the concept was part of the culture of residence life work, each individual has their own perception of what the term means to them. In addition, I explored how these factors influenced job satisfaction and persistence in the field. Interviews were conducted virtually in order to be recorded and transcribed. Questions began with a focus on the participants' perceptions of busyness (e.g., "When do you feel most busy in your current role?") and evolved into more nuanced questions related to the pressure of conforming to expectations (e.g., "What are some ideal worker norms for the residence life field, and do you feel pressure to conform to those norms?"). Participants were also asked to indicate how they manage busyness, what support systems they have in place,

Table 1.
Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Race/ethnicity	Gender identity	Job title	Institution type	Institution size
Andrew	White	Man	Community Director	Private	Mid-size
Angela	White	Woman	Residence Hall Director	Public	Large
Annie	White	Woman	Assistant Director	Private	Small
Arthur	Black	Man	Area Coordinator	Private	Mid-size
Brenda	White	Woman	Housing Operations Coordinator	Private	Mid-size
Cesar	Hispanic/ Latino	Woman	Assistant Director	Private	Small
Daria	White	Non-binary	Residence Life Coordinator	Public	Large
Erin	Hispanic/ Latino	Woman	Area Coordinator	Private	Small
Harper	Black	Woman	Residence Hall Director	Private	Mid-size
Harrison	White	Transgender	Residence Hall Director	Public	Large
Jacob	White	Man	Residence Life Coordinator	Public	Mid-size
Jose	Hispanic/ Latino	Man	Residence Hall Director	Private	Small
Larry	White	Man	Assistant Residence Hall Director	Public	Large
Mackenzie	Black	Woman	Assistant Director	Private	Small
Mark	White	Man	Residence Hall Director	Public	Large
Pasqual	Hispanic/ Latino	Man	Residence Hall Director	Public	Mid-size
Princess	Hispanic/ Latino	Woman	Residence Life Coordinator	Private	Small
Sam	White	Non-binary	Area Director	Private	Mid-size
Sarah	Asian	Woman	Residence Hall Director	Private	Small
Tara	White	Woman	Residence Hall Director	Public	Large

and how they perceive the role that the student affairs profession plays in promoting—whether intentionally or not—the notion that overwhelming busyness is inevitably a characteristic of working in the field.

Analysis

The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of busyness in their work as residence life professionals. To achieve this, I conducted individual interviews with 20 individuals and followed Giorgi's (1997) method for conducting descriptive phenomenological analysis. In descriptive phenomenology, the researcher's goal is to achieve a state where "the impact of the researcher on the inquiry is constantly assessed and biases and preconceptions neutralized, so that they do not influence the object of study" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). Thus, the first step in the Giorgian phenomenological method involved bracketing,

or writing notes about preconceived notions or ideas in order to ensure that one's own knowledge about the phenomenon in question does not influence analysis of the data (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008).

The coding process involved understanding the data holistically by reading through the data multiple times and marking every location where meaning changes (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). This coding process followed Saldaña's (2013) model, in which analysis occurs iteratively with each round of coding; this allowed me to use short phrases to represent the suggested meaning behind participants' statements. Codes were combined into thematic categories as they emerged (Giorgi, 2009). Random member checking was utilized to demonstrate validity (Elo et al., 2014), and the member checks included communication with individual participants after interviews were conducted to verify the accuracy of the transcripts and ensure that data was interpreted in the way it was intended.

Limitations

The individuals in this study chose to participate and therefore likely had a stronger inclination towards feeling affected by a sense of busyness. While the participant group was representative of multiple institution types and positions, it was not all-inclusive. Position descriptions vary between institutions, and institution type, size, and location may have influenced the experience that newer professionals discussed.

Positionality

As a White, cisgender man who has worked in multiple residence life and student affairs positions at Predominantly White Institutions, my perspective on this topic is influenced by my positions of power and my identity. Having served as an entry-level housing professional who progressed to mid-level and senior-level positions in residence life, my perspectives have been shaped by the contexts I have experienced and are not inclusive of all experiences and perspectives. I acknowledge that my perspective requires a willingness to identify my own privilege and role in perpetuating systems that have contributed to the problem at the root of this exploratory study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three primary themes emerged from analysis of the data: how participants navigate the culture of student affairs and residence life, which is often characterized by high expectations for workers; how they perceive job expectations (including both the written and unwritten rules of the job and, more notably, "other duties as assigned"); and how they maintain the boundaries between work and personal life—all of which influences their job satisfaction and career motivation.

Navigating the Culture of Student Affairs and Residence Life

Student affairs and housing work can be highly demanding; it is characterized by high expectations, high demands on time, and a reliance on personal investment in meeting student needs. The pressure created by these demands proved difficult for many participants. As Arthur explained, "Working in housing is non-stop. Sometimes it really does feel like the grind don't stop . . . I think we are sort of cultured to think that everything is of equal importance. And that can just bury you in busyness."

Participants identified several sources of pressure in residence life, the first of which is the notion that student needs should always be placed ahead of their own, a burden of responsibility that creates imbalanced approaches to self-care. Another pressure is the institutional expectation that their work is tied directly to student retention and student satisfaction, and this obligation to keep students happy in order to keep them enrolled was a constant burden. In addition, the pressure to live up to how supervisors and higher-level administrators approached their work was often perceived as a requirement to prioritize work over personal life.

When asked specifically about whether or not they perceived ideal worker norms during their professional experiences, participants acknowledged feeling that being busy was the expectation. As Tara recognized, "I think the culture of the field is that busyness must be a positive thing. It means . . . if you're busy, you're doing something important and so, I think that's part of [the problem]." The high expectations created pressure not only to be working all the time but also to work with a high level of care and attention, an expectation that Princess described as the pressure to be constantly "on":

I feel like I need to be on and constantly being attentive to everything that is happening in my building. Being constantly on is so unhealthy but it's just what you do. Even if we're encouraged not to, it's just ingrained in you that you do it.

Cesar recognized that the work culture often exaggerates the importance of busyness and of always being *on*: "We dramatize busyness, that's the nature of the field that you have to be busy. It gets blown out of proportion but [in student affairs] we don't know it can be any different." Participants were keenly aware of stories from colleagues about how these expectations can lead to burnout. When asked directly about their future career in residence life, they were reticent or, like Daria, concerned about the possibility of burnout:

If you're not flexing the extra time you work over 40 hours, then you're just proving that you're willing to work yourself to death and to be burnt out. And I was getting burnt out at the last job, so why would I continue to burn myself out here? I'm not even 30 yet, I shouldn't really be burnt out from what is in theory my ideal career.

Jose described how difficult it was to carry these feelings home:

The days can be so exhausting, when you go home after a day like that, you don't get to be the person you want to be. You don't have enough empathy to go around. I don't know if I can keep doing that my entire career.

The nervous anticipation about whether their current perceptions of excessive work demands would influence their career decisions was readily apparent.

Understanding Job Expectations

The culture of busyness is tied directly to job expectations. While the culture of the field dictates expectations that are characterized by ideal worker norms, participants often had trouble describing what was expected of them at work. They frequently blended logistical job expectations from a formal position description with assumed or ingrained philosophical approaches to the work. As Brenda explained, "I know what [tasks] I'm required to do, but I interpret it through how my boss views it, so I have to go above and beyond. What should be the simple things suddenly become things that absolutely drain me." Participants noted that a balance had to be struck between knowing what is on a job description and asking for guidance on how those tasks should be completed, adding that observing peers and colleagues could help them better understand department culture.

The notion of *written* versus *unwritten* job expectations was a point of contention for many. Erin tried to clarify some of the expectations by observing what her peers were doing on the job.

I think just being able to do the day to day and kind of see what my peers are doing and be like, okay, well, that's probably what I should be expected to do. And then asking questions, I'm not afraid to be like, okay, what specifically do I need to work on? What can I prioritize?

There was also pressure to go beyond the basic job description, as Jose revealed: "There's definitely a misalignment sometimes with what I think I need to do and what's actually in my job description. Because to do my job really well, I feel like I *have* to go above and beyond." That discrepancy led to uncertainty about their job performance, which Harrison described as a constant burden:

I think you just learn as you go that there's a difference between job expectations and what we expect from ourselves. I feel like I'm failing my students and department if I don't do everything, but not everything I do is in my job description. I burden myself with stuff and then think that's the expectation.

The pressure to approach their work like others in the department or institution did, whether perceived as healthy and productive or not, led to the perpetuation of a culture defined by busyness. As Tara commented, "Basically, I feel like we learn a lot by mimicking what we see others doing at work to learn our role. So anything problematic gets learned and passed on." Participants noted that they were first exposed to inflated job expectations in graduate school, something that became apparent in their initial professional roles.

Having a full calendar was described as a badge of honor for many participants, primarily because it demonstrated that they were working hard and were of value to the department, the institution, and the students. Busyness as a form of professional self-preservation—feeling that they are contributing value, are fully engaged, and are exceeding expectations in order to keep their job or have opportunities for advancement—created some discomfort but also provided opportunities to reflect on the pressure they were putting on themselves. Mackenzie acknowledged that sometimes doing your best has to be enough.

I can't accomplish all the things that I want to do, which ties into my sense of self-worth ... if only I could be more organized, if only I could find more hours in the day and I have to struggle with that. I have to challenge myself in those times to be like, "I am doing the best I can."

The sense that busyness was pervasive and overwhelming had detrimental effects on participants' confidence in their ability to complete their work, attend to their mental and physical health, and achieve a work/life balance. It also created tension about their willingness to persist in the housing profession.

Negotiating Boundaries

Expectations for ideal workers can include working excessive hours, blurring boundaries between work and personal life, and prioritizing work obligations over family life (Sallee, 2021). Living where you work, as these participants did, can create physical and psychological connections to the work environment that are hard to break, even for short periods of time. Erin highlighted this burden in her comments:

Sometimes it does feel like we think of [our work] as life or death where we have to be there for the students or else, like, a catastrophe will happen. And you're put in a role where you need to support these students at the end of the day, and it's a lot more of a personal connection. It's hard to balance something you're so invested in. My therapist jokes that she'd give me a compassion fatigue award.

As Angela suggested, layering the logistical and philosophical burdens of the work can exaggerate the feelings of busyness: "I feel like I take on the mental load of the work, and that just makes me more busy—the gaps of time that I have in my schedule are spent thinking of what needs to happen next."

Some participants noted that maintaining boundaries was easier over time and that they were able to grow more comfortable in their roles, but it still created obstacles. As Cesar said,

I struggled early on with prioritizing and just figuring out how to get things done, whereas now I feel more comfortable trying to decide if this is an immediate problem or a tomorrow problem. The work never goes away completely, but sometimes I have to just push it off if I can so I can breathe.

Cesar also highlighted a story about feeling pressured to work during a time when he really needed to tend to his family:

In my first [hall director] job, my dad got COVID and was in the hospital. I got 2 weeks off to go home and visit him, but I will always remember feeling like I had to bring my laptop to the hospital with me to make sure emails were getting a response. That's when I truly felt there were no boundaries anymore.

The inability to formulate and maintain boundaries created a sense of burnout for many participants, including Daria, who described how she felt stuck in what amounted to an endless cycle of busyness:

I think the biggest roadblock is then if you're always putting out fires, you never learn where the fire starts and how to just stop the fire from the get-go. And then I also think it leads us to just being stuck in these ruts of like, well this is how we've always done it. This is my life all the time.

Annie described this as a feeling of shutting down: "There comes this point where busyness creates roadblocks for me because it makes me want to just shut down. Your system is overwhelmed and can't process stuff anymore. And then obviously that affects how I present [myself] at work." Erin identified this directly as burnout:

I think my biggest challenge with the busyness is definitely going to be the burnout. And just the motivation to continue because I'm like, okay, I'm just so busy. I just want a break. That's all I want. And then I know I have to get the work done. So it's kind of like this fight between, okay, do I get some time off or do I just continue to push through and then just hope for the best?

Supervisors played a significant role in helping participants think more clearly about boundaries and expectations, though the culture of the field often supersedes even the best advice or guidance from a supervisor. As Pasqual explained,

Even with the best supervisor who supports you, when we come back after our comp time or vacation, it feels like we're doing all the work that we missed in the [time] we were not working. So it doesn't really feel like a break or time off. When we come back, we're doing the same amount of work all in two hours or whatever. Why even try to balance it all?

Erin commented specifically on the struggle to feel validated:

Sometimes there are moments where I talk to my supervisor about what I need, and it's kind of, like, in one ear [and] out the other kind of philosophy of like, "What do you mean 'It's what you need?'" I just want to be validated that these concerns [about burnout] are real.

Supervisors who perpetuate the culture of busyness also need to be part of the solution, which was challenging for some participants, who noted that though they wanted to be supporting supervisors who could help end the cycle of busyness, it would not be a simple change in mindset or action.

IMPLICATIONS

It is crucial that we find tangible and meaningful ways to dismantle ideal worker norms in student affairs work. Professionals (and especially supervisors) must be able to recognize these norms, learn how to address concerns about them within their office culture, and provide tangible methods for co-creating new norms with entry-level employees. Supervision is key to fostering the well-being of residence life professionals (Hodge et al., 2024), and a supervisor's ability to create reasonable expectations for employees is vital. Supervisors play a significant role in creating positive work environments and have a direct hand in fostering the notion that "well-being is linked to the quality of one's work, rather than just being a result of balance between work and life" (Chessman, 2021, p. 158). In order to create more equitable and flexible work environments, supervisors can partner with staff to actively rethink work options, both in terms of remote options and flex time; create structures for regular two-way feedback about expectations and managing workloads; and empower staff to take control of their schedules in ways that appropriately (and reasonably) meet the needs of students while also allowing for balance.

Professional staff who are encouraged to develop strategies to manage their own well-being may ultimately be more satisfied and effective employees, which in turn should translate to better service to students. This includes focusing on strategies that we often share with students about time

management and prioritizing tasks. Staff must be clear about workload capacity and willing to ask questions when needed in order to appropriately challenge implicit expectations.

Another important consideration is prioritizing output over activity. As noted by several participants, the act of being busy frequently interfered with their ability to accomplish the tasks at hand. For this reason, it is important to focus on the outcome of the task or project rather than assuming that busyness itself is proof of hard work. Practicing and encouraging self-care routines can help create a healthier balance, and this can be accomplished by creating space in routines by designating "meeting-free" times, committing portions of a day to focused project time, or specifying certain nights or weekends when personal or family life always takes priority.

Creating positive peer mentoring relationships between colleagues can be a valuable part of the process of addressing concerns about implicit versus explicit job expectations, encouraging healthy behaviors, and acknowledging (and then avoiding) passing on potentially unhealthy cultural norms within the department. While supported by supervisors, these mentoring relationships should focus exclusively on peer connections to promote honesty, transparency, and bonding over established practices.

Supervisors should focus on modeling a healthy work/life balance in order to empower staff to do the same. They can do this by taking advantage of professional development opportunities to teach strategies about managing priorities and talking honestly about the toxic culture of busyness. They should also encourage their entry-level professionals to disconnect from work when necessary and to combat the expectation that they should always be available (Moah, 2024).

Future research on this topic might include examining how busyness impacts personal identities, particularly in parent and family situations, as well as racial, cultural, and gender identities. The present study focuses on residence life professionals, but different functional areas of student affairs have distinct subcultures and would be worthy of investigation. In addition, institutional context may impact perceptions of busyness, since several factors, such as resources and staffing, are unique to each organization.

CONCLUSION

The culture of busyness and the disruption of work/life boundaries has created an untenable situation for many in the field, and it is important to address these concerns. Student affairs educators must be able to remain student-centric, and a clear focus on employee well-being can encourage healthy boundaries, balanced approaches to work, and clarity and integrity around expectations and workload. Residence life employees who are overworked, stressed out, and unable to manage busyness are at risk of being unable to provide the high level of student care and support that is required. The demands of being busy, while often focused on direct student support, can have negative consequences for students when they limit the effectiveness

and longevity of the professionals serving them. In addition, professionals who suffer from burnout cannot effectively serve as role models for the students they serve.

Student affairs leaders must adjust to the demands and needs of the changing workforce and actively address problems associated with a busyness culture. One problem is that busyness can be used as a means of validating the quantifiable perceived value of an employee to their departments or institutions; professionals have a strong desire to look competent and armed with long to-do lists and full schedules, but this can lead to significant mental, physical, and emotional challenges. The pressures of high expectations, constant demand, and busyness are among many factors facing student affairs educators; these issues are persistent and contribute to concerns about attrition in college student affairs.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you personally define busyness in your role, and how does this definition align or conflict with how your department seems to define it?
2. In what ways is busyness rewarded or reinforced in residence life and student affairs?
3. Busyness is often glorified. Have you seen evidence of this in your own work environment or in other professional settings?
4. What are some written and unwritten expectations in residence life roles that contribute to a culture of busyness?
5. How does the culture of busyness and the assumptions that come with working in residence life shape your expectations about workload and burnout?
6. What organizational, departmental, and institutional changes would be necessary to disrupt this culture of busyness? Where would be a good starting point?
7. In what ways has busyness culture shaped your decisions about staying in or leaving residence life or even student affairs altogether?
8. Based on the boundary challenges described by participants, which one resonated most with your own experiences and why?
9. How does living where you work and that constant feeling of always being on call affect your ability to create and maintain healthy work/life boundaries?

Discussion questions were developed by Marianna Canales, Texas A&M University.