Moving Through

Conversation #1

Before beginning the interview it is important for you to realize the following is not a check-listed task for you to complete, but rather, an opportunity for you to engage your residents in conversation. These conversations reflect responsive interviewing in which you respond to the resident and then ask further questions about what they tell you instead of relying on predetermined questions (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). Because of this, “the interviewer must follow the respondent’s lead, which makes the conversation unpredictable; this requires attentive flexibility on the part of the interviewer, who needs to understand the grounding for this strategy, trust the process, and be able to adapt to potential vagaries that might arise” (p. 503).

This kind of interviewing style should provide you with a window into how your residents currently go about making meaning and defining themselves and their relationships. In order to do this, though, it is important to build rapport with your residents. Do this by asking questions at the beginning of the conversation that help you get to know a little bit about them.

Given this relationship, and the goals of this department strategy, we have listed several ways for you to come to understand more about your resident and their expectations for university life. The topical areas for each interview along with several guiding questions have been listed below to help you frame your conversation.

Roommate Agreement Review

Possible Probes:

- Tell me a little bit about your roommate agreement. How did you come to a decision with your roommate(s) about how you would interact with one another?
- Do you think you’ll have any issues adjusting to living with another person?
- How can I help you in this adjustment?

Advising/Educational Goals

Possible Probes:

- Let’s talk about your expectations coming into this year. What do you expect it to be like to be a second/third/fourth year student?
- Have you met with a faculty advisor? Do you know who your faculty advisor is?
- Have you decided on a major? Why did you choose that major? What has you experience been with your major classes so far?
- Are you involved with any activities outside of class that relate to your major and future goals?
- If you were to have one goal in terms of your academics this year, what would it be? Why? How do you think that will benefit you in the long run?
If you are working with a student who went through the first year “moving in” interviews, you should also follow up with the challenge to reflect on culture and society that was posed at the end of their first year interviews. Please refer to the Moving In Conversation Guide to reference those questions.

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Conversation #2

In order to get the most out of each interview, it is important to build on the previous conversation in order to inform the second. Before you begin the next one-on-one, you should consult your notes from the previous conversation and refresh your memory about the particular resident.

You should begin your one-on-one by asking any pertinent follow up questions (e.g. Ask how the student is adjusting to living with a roommate if he or she expressed that as one of his or her concerns during the first interview), and then transition into the new topics for the next interview.

Also, while it is important to let the resident make sense of his or her own experiences, you should also be knowledgeable of the possible resources available for any particular issue or problem the student may be facing. In this interview, it is important to take note of how the student makes sense of difference. What qualifies as difference for the student? Does he or she choose to interact with those different from him or her, or does the student just avoid all difference? Those are points you should be taking into account when talking with your resident.

Meaningful Interactions with Difference

Possible Probes:

- Usually college is a place where you encounter people who differ from you because of different backgrounds, beliefs, preferences, values, personalities, etc. Have you had interactions with people who you perceive as different from you? If so, tell me about them?
- What have these interactions been like? How have you made sense of them? What ideas have you gathered from these interactions?

Study Abroad

Possible Probes:

- Have you considered participating in a study abroad opportunity?
- What do you hope to gain from participating in an experience like that?
- Is there something about studying abroad that worries you? How do you think you can better prepare yourself for encountering and interacting with a different culture?

Community Standards

Possible Probes:
RA One-on-Ones Conversations – Upperclass Students Guide

- Did your experience with the discussion on community standards help to make you feel more a part of this community?
- How do you think that discussion has influenced the people in this corridor?
- Is there anything about the community standards we’ve set up that you would like to revisit at some point?

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**Conversation #3**

Getting a student to talk about his or her personal values, where they come from and why they are important can be a very difficult task to accomplish. Most time, students are not able to articulate why they believe certain things, but there are ways to ask questions that will get at the heart of the issue.

In this interview, it is also important for you to realize the importance of silence. Just because someone isn’t talking doesn’t mean that reflection is not happening. Often times, students need that silent space in order to think about things they have not had an opportunity to discuss before. Don’t feel like you have to fill that silence with other clarifying questions or chitchat. Also remember that what the student is sharing in this particular interview can be extremely personal and sometimes confusing for the student. It is important to not press the student too hard as to make them uncomfortable and shut off from the rest of the interview.

During this interview it is very important for you to pay close attention to what a student is saying. Look for areas in which the student talks about having his or her beliefs challenged and ask questions that pertain to how he or she dealt with that challenge.

As always, it is important to ask pertinent follow-up questions from the previous interview as both a way to provide continuity for your resident as well as to ease into the rest of the interview.

**Define and Refine Personal Values**

Possible Prompts:

- Have you had to face any difficult decisions? If so, tell me about how you work through or process such decisions. Are there people you look to for guidance in these situations?
- Has there been any time that what you wanted and what others wanted from you conflicted? If so, what was that like? How did you handle it?
- How do you think being a student at Miami has affected you? What do you think prompted this? How do you feel about it? (Draw out possible challenges to beliefs, sense of self and relationships)
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**Conversation #4**

In this interview, you will be referencing topics discussed in interview #5. Before you begin, you should take a few minutes to refresh your memory on that interview and jot down several follow-up questions that would help the student talk about how they either met or did not meet goals they set at the beginning of the year, or how those goals changed over the course of the year.

Before you begin the eighth one-on-one, you should have a conversation with your supervisor about additional resources regarding internships, professional schools and experiences either on or off campus that will help students start to plan for life after Miami.

**Assess and Refine Academic Goals**

Possible Prompts:

- I remember you talking about (something about their expectations for the year) at the beginning of the year. How did that turn out for you? Was this year what you expected it to be?
- How successful were you in your academic goal you set at the beginning of the year? Why? Did you goal change at all over the course of the year?
- What are your plans for next year?

**Explore Post Graduation Experiences and Opportunities**

Possible Prompts:

- Have you begun thinking what you want to do after you graduate from Miami? Graduate or professional school? Employment?
- Have you found any internship or summer opportunities that will help you prepare for life after Miami? What do you hope to accomplish through that?
- Do you think you’ll be able to apply any of the skills or knowledge gained through those experiences to your academic or co-curricular life when you come back to Miami next year?

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