

## **Literature and Evidence Based Practices Supporting the Curricular Approach for Student Affairs**

The terms “residential curriculum” and “curricular approach” are used to describe an intentional, specifically-structured way of promoting learning in college and university student affairs programs. Borrowing from techniques utilized by classroom-based teachers, the curricular approach to student affairs designs a series of successive learning and engagement opportunities for students that are measurable against defined objectives. Utilizing this intentional process allows an institution to better improve their efforts year-over-year, something not easily accomplished through more traditional ad-hoc methods.

Implemented at the University of Delaware in the early 2000s, the model was first detailed in a 2006 article by Kerr and Tweedy titled, “Beyond seat time and student satisfaction: A curricular approach to residential education,” in *About Campus* magazine. Kerr, Tweedy, Edwards, and Kimmel (2017) followed up on their *About Campus* article a decade later further refining the notion of a residential curriculum and expanding its applicability as a curricular approach to all of student affairs work. This work was expanded and codified in the book, *The Curricular Approach to Student Affairs: A Revolutionary Shift for Learning Beyond the Classroom* (Kerr, Edwards, Tweedy, Lichterman, & Knerr, 2020).

Originally focused solely on departments of housing and residence life, this approach led to the establishment of ACPA’s Residential Curriculum Institute (RCI) in 2007. This has since expanded to entire divisions of student affairs and their related departments, resulting in a re-naming of the Institute to the Institute on the Curricular Approach (ICA). Since then, the curricular approach has become increasingly common and popular at institutions of higher education. Pre-pandemic, the Institute was drawing over 500 participants a year from across the country (and world), with additional registrants on a wait list.

The curricular approach maintains strong roots in housing and residence life. In his 2015 book, *Student Learning in College Residence Halls*, Blimling (2015) provided an overview of the curricular approach and related models for designing residential education initiatives. Likewise, ACUHO-I’s Campus Housing Management series (Dunkel & Baumann, 2013) contributed text providing more details about the approach and its application in residence life. As a core feature of many institutions of higher education, residence life remains a critical component of a curricular approach.

Focused research efforts on the curricular approach have included examinations of organizational culture shifts required by the approach (Lichterman, 2016, Kropf, 2020), the impact of curricular efforts on staff members (Stauffer & Kimmel, 2019; Pernotto, 2021) and students (Sanders, 2018, Scheibler, 2021) and their experience of the curriculum. Further targeted research was conducted on how curricular efforts can support under-represented student populations (Williams, et al., 2020).

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*Adapted from Dr. Paul Gordon Brown's work on the Curricular Approach for Student Affairs*