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ESTABLISHING A GIFTED & TALENTED CENTER WITHIN THE URI HONORS PROGRAM

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ESTABLISHING A GIFTED & TALENTED CENTER WITHIN THE HONORS PROGRAM

By Joseph A Santiago

Objective: To establish a Gifted and Talented Program that is linked with the Honors Department at URI to attract, support, and challenge individuals on the Kingston Campus. This program would work as Living Learning Community with students who elect to be live on campus together and give an opportunity for students living off campus to work collaboratively in a creative and supportive environment beyond the classroom. The targeted population for this program would be those individuals coming in from high schools and/or from other University programs.

An environment designed to stimulate gifted and talented students who are entering URI or who are seeking a more engaging connection to education and programs would be structured around individuals' physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Part of the program would function as a living learning community (LLC) where students will be able to come together to create bonds with others in the program and support each other in their own projects, research, and studies. The expectations of being part of this community will be:

1. The students will work with staff mentors to peer facilitate a conversation group where they can share their experiences, interests, and ask for input/discussion on topics of their choosing.
2. Students will work on personal projects that connect to the topic of the Honors Colloquium or research projects arranged through the Honors department.
3. Students will assess their own physical, emotional, and intellectual potential and get feedback from a mentor in a learning contract that maps out the different ways that their potential strengths and weaknesses can be enhanced. They will state how these strengths will be assessed and demonstrated through their experiences and provide examples of social and academic proof. Physical exercise will be part of their systematic plans to improve themselves and will reduce emotional intensity by creating healthy routines to deal with the stress productively.
4. Students must keep their grades at the required levels of the Honors Program.
5. Students will have the option of creating and facilitating programs from the LLC for the overall University community. For example, programs like Toast Master's, RI Business Assistance program, etc., are programs that link the knowledge acquired at the University to real world skills and potential.

This program will emphasize knowledge sharing and be defined by motivated students who show great potential to be global leaders. By targeting gifted and talented students directly, many high achievers will seek to be part of the program and help bridge the gap between those just entering URI from high school and those already in college. This hands-on approach allows schools like the M.E.T. in Rhode Island to validate their students' current learning styles as they were taught to value multiple intelligences and approaches in their education.

The staff needed for this program would be minimal but should be well versed in coaching, have some experience working with different populations of developmentally diverse individuals, and maintain a broad knowledge of several disciplines. Having a staff that works primarily in the common room in the dorm housing the LLC would add consistency to their living conditions and assist/support students when they most need it outside of the classroom.

Gifted and talented individuals can become confused and frustrated easily with social and systematic ambiguities that are common place. Utilizing a Living Learning Contract to break down weaknesses and strengths of an individual with a plan of how they can be pulled together will give students a systematic plan to support them and reduce their anxieties by improving their awareness of social scripts across various contexts. In their Living Learning Contracts there should be a mentoring piece in which they agree to pair up and help another student of similar interests just coming into the program. This will create a social link that will establish a cohort of students that take care of each other socially and share information that will challenge them to be continually creative.

I have provided a sample overview that could be used as a broad template for individuals' ongoing tasks and goals who take part in the Living Learning Contract.

GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

Knowledge, Behavioral Performance, Skills, and Content Learning Overview

STUDENT		
Student Name	Review Period	
Major	Mentor	
PERFORMANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES		
Zero to 2 months	2 to 4 months	4-6 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Become familiar with your department and program’s goals. – Work with your mentor to define and document your goals. Include what you are expected to produce by your first review, activities needed to accomplish results, and success criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Make certain defined goals and criteria are realistic. Renegotiate if necessary. – Are you focusing your time on the goals you committed to? If not, either work with your mentor to change your goals or reevaluate how you spend your time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review performance goals to see if you are on target. Reprioritize work accordingly.
NOTES/ACTIONS		
SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT		
Zero to 2 months	2 to 4 months	4-6 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understand the specific skills and knowledge you need. Use the job profile as your guide. – Build a skill development plan based on the goals agreed to by you and your manager. – Complete the new student orientation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attend one of the Honors lectures in the Colloquium. – Review your development plan and suggested curriculum for additional skills and training. – Adjust your work out/exercise program for weather and academic schedule. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Update goals and assess the next steps for your program. – Create a timeline with associated tasks that you will follow in order to attain the skills outlined in your personal development plan.
NOTES/ACTIONS		
PROCESSES AND METHODS		
Zero to 2 months	2 to 4 months	4-6 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Familiarize yourself with work processes and methods used in your field. Be clear on how you can support and develop these processes and goals. – Set clear timelines for task due dates. Keep timelines up to date. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify and eliminate unnecessary variation in the way you perform work processes and routines. – Ensure that your work responsibilities are clear, defined, and realistic. – Establish alternative routes to get the skills or knowledge you are seeking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Get to know the people who work cross-functionality in common work processes. – Seek to simplify any work processes in order to cut cycle time. – Flush out social contexts that you operate in to assess your own skills and performance.
NOTES/ACTIONS		
FEEDBACK		
Zero to 2 months	2 to 4 months	4-6 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understand the different types of feedback and the ways in which you will receive feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are you getting the feedback you need? Is feedback timely, specific, and frequent? – Compare actual performance and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are you giving feedback to others who need it? – Compare actual and expected

STUDENT	
Student Name	Review Period
Major	Mentor
expected performance.	performance.
NOTES/ACTIONS	