

ABSTRACT

Many professional associations in higher education hold conferences and conventions on a recurring basis, often with residential college stakeholders taking part. Using a qualitative historical research perspective, we derived themes from conference program schedules (e.g., program session titles, presenters, presenter affiliations) for two prominent associations related to residential colleges: Collegiate Way International and the Residential College Society. Data were collected from 2014 to 2020, examined, analyzed by thematic content analysis, and then organized by association, year, and location. Findings revealed the professional development topics most relevant to residential college stakeholders: specifically, what constitutes a residential college model, the resident experience, and leadership experiences. We have compared the associations, offered recommendations for practice, including consistency in presentation counts, and presented insights into professional development topics that can advance the field. Finally, we have identified key institutions within the residential college movement and discussed how to diversify the field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discipline-Specific Conference Materials

- A variety of fields have used conference program analysis to gain insights into their professions
 - Ex: American Society of Criminology (Barbarett, 2007), Association for Applied Sports Psychology (Kamphoff et al., 2010)
- Scholars may examine conference materials for the presence of a specific theme, compare conferences within an academic discipline, or conduct a broad content analysis over a timeframe

Relevance of Analysis to Professional Practice

- Content analysis of conference programs have been used to...
 - Identify the need for cultural diversity within conferences (Kamphoff et al., 2010)
 - Discover gaps in dialogue on a topic (Kortegast et al., 2020)
 - Direct future studies, research questions, and agendas across multiple disciplines of study (Krause, 2020)

Lack of Analysis on Residential College Research

- There is a gap in the literature of conference program analysis related to residential colleges
 - Such analysis can provide insight into the increasingly popular residential college movement (current trends, influences, future direction)

PURPOSE

Our purpose was to examine the conference program content of two prominent residential college professional associations to determine whether the conference programming revealed values and professional development priorities.

METHODS

Design

- This research utilized a constructivist, historical research design using a thematic content analysis

Data Sources & Collection

- Data were collected from The Collegiate Way International (CWI) and the Residential College Society (RCS)
- Data were gathered through a review of professional association websites, conference-specific websites, and email communication with professional association volunteers
 - Conferences schedules obtained for 2014 – 2020

Analysis

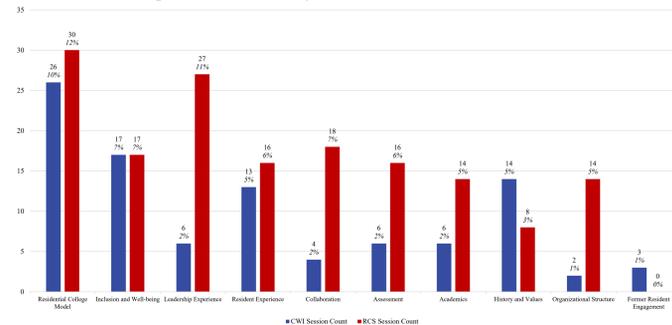
- Thematic content analysis: a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data based on implicit and explicit interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2020)
- Each member of the research team became familiar with the data and coded the data individually
- Then, codes were discussed and transformed into groups

FINDINGS

Topics of Scheduled Program Sessions

- Topics of program sessions centered around 10 emergent themes:
 - Former resident engagement
 - Leadership experience
 - Resident experience
 - Collaboration
 - Assessment
 - The residential college model
 - History & values
 - Organizational structure
 - Inclusion & wellbeing
 - Academics

Descriptive Statistics of Emergent Themes from Conference Session Titles



Similarities & Differences by Professional Association

- RCS has higher counts of every theme except for inclusion & wellbeing, history & values, and former resident engagement
- Both associations had the residential college model as their top theme
- RCS did not offer any presentations on former resident engagement, while CWI only offered 3
- The most frequent presentations at RCS were leadership experiences and collaboration, while CWI favored sessions related to history and values

Institutions Engaged with the Professional Associations

- CWI: 18 unique institutions presented across 3 conferences
 - 3 most frequent presenters: Durham University, University of Otago, Rice University
- RCS: 42 unique institutions presented across 7 conferences
 - 3 most frequent presenters: Southern Methodist University, Baylor University, Vanderbilt University
- CWI seems to be more diverse, as RCS presenters were predominantly private schools in Texas and the southeastern U.S.

Presenter Count by Institutional Affiliation and Association

Association	Institution	Number of presenters
CWI (n = 18)	Durham University	23
	University of Otago	9
	Rice University	8
	Trent University	6
	University of Macau	4
	York University	4
	Yale University	3
	Stellenbosch University	2
	University of Cambridge	2
	Universidad de las Americas - Puebla	2
	Australian National University	1
	Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas Architects	1
	National University of Singapore	1
	New York University – Abu Dhabi	1
	St. Andrews	1
	University of the Free State	1
	University of Virginia	1
	Yale – NUS College - Singapore	1
RCS (n = 42)	Southern Methodist University	47
	Baylor University	34
	Vanderbilt University	23
	Virginia Tech	18
	Elon University	15
	University of South Carolina	15
	Appalachian State University	12
	Michigan State University	8
	Washington University in St. Louis	8
	LEAD LLC	7
	Purdue University	4
	University of Colorado at Boulder	4
	Hanbury Design	3
	New York University	3
	Northwestern University	3
	Radford University	3
	University of Macau	3
	University of North Carolina Greensboro	3
	University of Virginia	3
	Baylor and Beyond LLC	2
	Dartmouth College	2
	Murray State University	2
	Oklahoma State University	2
	Princeton University	2
	Rice University	2
	Skyfactor	2
	Tulane University	2
	University of Southern California	2
	Biddison Hier, Ltd	1
	Cornell University	1
Emmanuel College	1	
Fairfield University	1	
Hanbury Evans Wight Vlattas & Co.	1	
Impact LLC	1	
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	1	
LEED AP	1	
Marquette University	1	
The Pennsylvania State University	1	
Syracuse University	1	
The State University of New Jersey	1	
University of Miami	1	
University of Pennsylvania	1	

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

Improving Consistency for Posterity

- Conference programs frequently exhibited inconsistencies between professional association and years
 - Ex: some conferences included abstracts for each program session, while others did not
- Conferences should strive for more consistent reporting of sessions, so that future researchers will better understand the field's historical context during a given period

Professional Development Themes & Next Steps

- Differing trends within the residential college movement, suggesting geographic influences
 - RCS: leadership experiences and assessment topics are of more interest to this U.S. audience
 - CWI: the only association that discussed former resident engagement
- Both organizations utilized indirect explanations of the residential college model through campus-specific examples rather than philosophical discussion
 - Ex: "Arana & Abbey Reflections: The Collegiate Way at the University of Otago" (CWI, 2014).
- Neither association offered an explicit definition of the residential college model, though this is of concern to both audiences
 - Missed opportunity to create space for robust dialogue to frame a shared definition of the residential college movement
- The associations may consider creating a joint working group to better articulate the movement

Identifying the Players & Diversifying Practice

- CWI & RCS should diversify the number of institutions that speak at their conferences
 - By discovering why some institutions have more presenters than others, the associations can discover topics that each feels are important or topics to prioritize for presentation
 - Creates a shared understanding of what topics are more likely to be chosen for presentation

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