

Greetings NCHO! My name is Emily Baker and I serve as the New Professionals Representative for our organization. I am currently a Residence Coordinator at Duke University and have served in this role for just over a year now. Previously, I was a graduate student at NC State.

My time in this state has been an opportunity for growth and development both as a graduate student as well as a professional. I encourage all of you to take advantage of the knowledge, wisdom and experience that exists in our state. As your New Professionals Representative, it is my responsibility to represent you on our Executive Board as well as serve you throughout the year. This is a largely ambiguous role, but I am working on making it better defined. If you are a new professional (0-3 years of experience), please ensure you join our listserv by sending me an email at [emily.e.baker@duke.edu](mailto:emily.e.baker@duke.edu). We can then be in communication about trainings, job opportunities, current issues we are facing or social events.

I will be in attendance at the conference October 16-18<sup>th</sup> here in Durham and hope you will join me. Please be sure to introduce yourself and let me know how I can better serve you in my role!



## **An Open Letter to New Professionals: The RELI Experience**

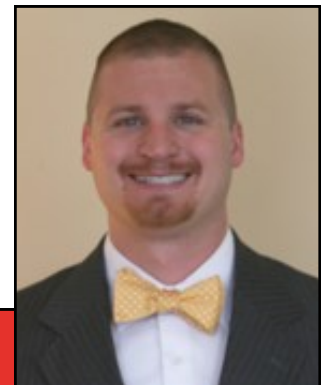
*Submitted By: Michael Cherry and Eric W. Scott*

You're entering your first, second, or third year as a new professional in a Housing and Residence Life program. You are likely overwhelmed with this abstract concept called professional development and the many opportunities and functions that it can represent. There is also likely a set of growth and developmental experiences you are going through as you progress into the professional world of academia that is more common than you believe. We (Eric Scott from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Michael Cherry from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) have chosen to share our experiences with you and encourage you to consider the RELI experience. With three and two years of professional experience respectively we each pursued RELI through a combination of regional involvement in SEAHO, the endorsements of colleagues, and the support of our departments.

First, we'll dispel some myths about what RELI is and is not. RELI, or the Regional Entry Level Institute is an intensive four day experience that combines seminar style presentations from leaders in the field of Housing and Residence Life with small group or cluster dialogue and one on one mentorship opportunities. RELI is not a conference, recruitment tool, or a time for self-promotion, although the community and network that forms can be beneficial to you on a personal and professional level. RELI is also not a vacation or an opportunity to see another campus for a few days, although the food is delicious and the opportunity to stay on another campus is a great experience. RELI is truly a place where you must invest your time and energy, but when you do you gain or enhance professional competencies, explore personal goals and values, and may be able to help others through their process along the way.

Second, if RELI is not a conference then how does one know what you'll learn? The two RELI Coordinators choose eight faculty members to present on chosen competencies in which the faculty have experience. These competencies are chosen specifically to help young professionals learn a few of the necessary skills to be successful in our current positions while setting us up to be ready for the next level. The institute started with an overview of professional competencies for Housing officers and then focused on these eight specific competencies: professionalism, advising/mentoring, facilities, supervision, crisis management (specifically student death), budgeting, assessment, and professional development. Each faculty member led their session as a mixture of presentation of best practices and their personal experience, small group discussion, and personal reflection. If you are competent in one topical area, there was the opportunity to focus on others while still being able to share your experience with your peers. Everyone walked away with something they didn't know before. Although the primary goal of RELI is not networking, it is impossible to spend 80 hours of intense learning and reflection without forming a community amongst the group. Each faculty member leads a cluster of four entry level professionals and throughout the institute helps guide discussion where each member shares both their successes and their struggles.

Michael Cherry is a Community Director at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and sits on the NCHO Executive Council.



Eric Scott is a Coordinator for Residence Life at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

An environment is created where peers are encouraged and ready to identify with your challenges and learn from others. These deep moments of connection with faculty members and peers alike are quickly followed by laughs and funny stories, like when 40 housing professionals are forced to evacuate the hall due to a fire alarm in the rain or when we all explained the quiet hours rule and that the first floor TV is broken but only till Saturday at 2 p.m. These moments of sharing build the bonds that help keep the RELI cohort linked long after the institute is closed.

One of the great benefits of RELI is the opportunity to determine professional direction and to be re-centered while gaining the comfort of knowing you do your work for the right reasons. Cluster leaders and cluster groups are great for these exploratory conversations and lead many different participants in different directions depending on their needs, values, and passions. The experience is one that allows you to explore where you are and where you may want to be and is of upmost value to those interested in continuing in the field of Housing and Residence Life. The large group sessions are equally as valuable as they offer practical information and insights applicable to both current positions and future responsibilities.

Perhaps some of the most significant takeaways for us included 1. To trust your instincts and know that if you are doing your work for the right reason, good things will come, 2. The stories and viewpoints of those around you are valid, important, and necessary, 3. RELI is meant for your development and you have to take charge of what you want to learn. 4. It is not about being seen or getting recognized, but about the work that is done to best serve our students.

Now it's your turn! RELI 2014 isn't as far away as you think. If this sounds like an experience you're interested in, mark your calendars for RELI 2014 which will be held at Emory University in Atlanta Georgia. The institute is typically the first week in June and applications go live in January via [www.SEAHO.org/reli](http://www.SEAHO.org/reli), closing in early March shortly after the annual SEAHO conference. The typical cost is around \$200 and there are many scholarship opportunities available through SEAHO and NCHO. So go online now check out the application questions from 2013 and start working on your resume. This year, only 30 participants were chosen out of close to 100 applicants, so make sure you know why you want to attend and what you hope to get out of the experience.

We hope that you'll consider RELI 2014 when evaluating your personal and professional development over the next year. RELI is a positive, transformative, and overall fun experience that you will value for years to come.

Sincerely,  
Eric Scott and Michael Cherry

**Safe travels to Durham, N.C. for  
the Annual Conference**

**NCHO** 