



NWACUHO New Professional Award – Alberta: Auburn Phillips Nominated by Steve Brodrick, University of Lethbridge

Our field is rich with talented and experienced colleagues who are great examples of commitment to the student experience and service excellence. We are fortunate in Alberta to have a history of excellence in Residence Life and a supportive environment for new Residence Life Professionals to enter the field and benefit from mentorship and leadership. The new energy and ideas that our new staff bring to the job makes residence life better each year and inspires new leaders and delivers new outcomes. Recently, my department was fortunate enough to be the recipient of this new energy and talent. In August of 2015, my team was pleased to welcome a new residence Life & Education Coordinator position to our office. Auburn Phillips has already made a significant impact on our team on our student body and I am very confident that we have acquired an outstanding member of the Residence Life Profession who is a credit to both the University of Lethbridge and to our profession.

August as we all know is a busy time to start a new role in Residence Life, but Auburn greeted this challenge with tremendous energy and jumped right in getting to know our Residence Assistant and Para-Professional team and learning about the training and orientation process as if it were second nature to her. Auburn comes from a mental health education background and has an education background in Sociology and Women's Studies. Her academic credentials combined with her infection enthusiasm and openness have enabled her to excel in a complex role with no prior residence life experience

In the first few months of last semester, our campus saw an unprecedented number of residence life crises. Auburn was thrown in to the deep end as the sheer volume of mental health and student at risk cases in our student body left us no choice but to address these matters with an "all hands on deck" approach. Although new to her role and still learning processes, Auburn tackled these challenges with intelligence and compassion. The time and dedication required to manage this case load was a huge burden and had a significant emotional impact on everyone involved. Auburn was instrumental not only in assisting our students, but in keeping our team of RA's positive and alert. As a consequence our students, RAs and professional colleagues and stakeholders have all come to trust and respect her.

Beyond her dedication to residence life, Auburn has also shown a willingness to help out in all aspects of our Housing team and has endeared herself to our Office Administration as well as our Maintenance and Housekeeping groups. She was quick to join our maintenance and facilities group in responding to an afterhours water main break affecting some townhomes and an apartment building. In addition to quickly grasping the leadership of our RA team and troubleshooting for our on-campus student population she has already achieved accomplishments that I can only describe as punching well above her weight class. Significant accomplishments she has delivered in her first 5 months include enhancing our department's connection with our Counselling Services team. As Auburn comes from a mental health background she is a champion for mental health and wellness for our students and for our staff. As a certified instructor for Mental Health First Aid programming, Auburn has taken on the challenge of educating our staff and many of our stakeholders about this important challenges facing our campus.

Working closely with campus stakeholders, Auburn has been co-leading a process to form new sexual violence policy for our campus to be recommended to the President's executive. As an advocate for survivors of gender based violence on our campus, Ms. Phillips has made a lasting impact in this content area not just in residence, but for our entire University community. The policy recommendations based on solid research and stakeholder dialogue she and her team has put forward will make our campus a safer place for the entire University of Lethbridge Community.

As I used to be responsible for the residence life portfolio and it is near and dear to my heart, I hold high expectations for the professional on my team that would run this program and lead this team. Ms. Phillips has left me reassured that our program is in good hands and will only continue to thrive. I am so impressed with Auburn's quick take on the learning curve of Res Life and commitment to maintaining a student focus and dedication to enhancing the quality of residence life experience for our most important stakeholder.

Auburn Phillips has enhanced our collaboration with the external community through her connections to various resources in our city and through her advocacy through service organizations such as YWCA, Lethbridge Family Services and Mental Health First Aid Canada. . She has an appetite for new initiatives that enhance our student experience such as bringing in resources for training from community partners (including some at no cost which her supervisor enjoys). An example of this is a "Community Helper" initiative which offers self-harm and suicide awareness programs to students of the general population, in addition to our normal student staff training.

In her first few months, Auburn has shown an interest in getting involved with the professional networks in our field including the Residence Life Professional Association where she attend the Fall Business Meeting and notably led her team of RA's to a third straight "Spirit Award" at the RLPA Lead Conference. As our new Residence Life & Education Coordinator, Auburn has been supportive and collaborative as she explores all the possibilities of making a difference to our students. Through Auburn's leadership, it is no exaggeration to claim that our Residence Life program has risen to prominence as the flagship student service unit at the University of Lethbridge. This success has resulted in our University's Provost recently asked for a presentation on Residence Life at an upcoming Senate meeting. Auburn has demonstrated herself to be an active champion and advocate of residence life at the institutional and regional level bringing pride to our institution and to our Residence Life Professional Associations. I feel strongly that Auburn embodies the best of profession and would be a deserving recipient of NWACUHO New Professional Award.