RA essays

1 - How would you hope to grow personally and/or professionally through the RA position? If you are a current RA, please elaborate on how you have already grown and include how another year in the RA role will challenge you.

I am a person who has grown up with countless examples of how being put in a situation that requires hard work creates the best type of character in a person. My parents and their families are the most influential examples in my life. They made their way to the United States to create a new life for themselves. They proved to me that no matter how insurmountable an obstacle may be, and no matter if you succeed or fail, there will always be a lesson to gain from the experience. Through this RA position, I hope to challenge and expand my work ethic and gain meaningful experience in a position that requires managing many responsibilities and having a well-formed set of social skills. I believe an RA position will demonstrate to future employers that I am a person who can work well under pressure as well as solve any unforeseeable problems that may arise quickly and efficiently. Additionally, I look forward to the opportunity I will have to make newfound connections with the people I will meet in my community and make sure I positively influence their experience as a Tech student. All in all, I wish to be a trusted and helpful person in their lives.

2 - What type of experience do you want residents to have living in your community? Describe 3 characteristics you would want your residents to use to describe your community and what type of activities they would participate in.

The three characteristics I wish to describe my community are open, caring, and homey. As their RA, I hope to provide my residents with a stable and comforting place they can consider a respite from the general anxiety and stress of college. I also hope to make sure the type of environment established in my community is one where all residents can feel they are welcome and open to communicating and connecting with me and the other residents. Since the residents will probably be unable to go home or see their families very often, my hope is that they are able to find moments where they can feel they are at home in their newfound community. Activities I will coordinate are ones that promote bonding between the residents and allow them to branch out and meet new people. For example, at the beginning of the year, we could do an activity similar to speed-dating, where each resident gets to talk to another resident for 2 minutes before switching partners. This activity could give the residents the chance to introduce themselves. We could also create a message board in the hall where residents can put up messages they want to give to the rest of the hall, and everyone has the opportunity to reply to these messages.

3 - Detail strategies you would use to connect with a resident who is not engaged in your community.

The first thing I would do if I notice a resident is not engaged in the community is to determine if I, as the RA, have been inclusive and open enough for my residents to feel comfortable enough in their living space. Then, I would communicate with that resident’s roommate (if they have one) to gain more information on whether the resident has been engaged with them in any way and if there are any immediate concerns I should be aware of. If I notice this lack of engagement has been going on for a while, I will strategize on the best type of community activity I can arrange that won’t require a lot of social activity, with the hopes that the resident can slowly become more engaged. Such an activity can seem more appealing to a resident who may feel awkward engaging with others in the community or is worried about how to go about doing so. Throughout all this, I would be making sure I attempt to strike up a casual conversation with that resident specifically as often as I can in order to make them feel like there are people in the community who are friendly and welcoming. This may encourage the resident to take their own steps to connect with others.

4 - Tell us about a team you were part of and describe your contributions to the team. What did you find most enjoyable and challenging about that team? (Current RAs should discuss their role on their HD team.)

I have been very involved in the Muslim Student Association throughout my first semester in Tech. Since being Muslim is a big part of my identity, I felt very at place among other Muslim people and slowly made many connections and friends among the MSA. Around the beginning of the semester, I joined the marketing committee, which is tasked with running the various social media accounts of the MSA, taking pictures of our many events, maintaining our website, releasing a weekly newsletter, creating and advertising flyers for events, and talking to and including those who seem new to the MSA during our organization’s events. Throughout my time on this committee and in the MSA as a whole, I have learned how to better work with others when many tasks need to be done every week. I understood the importance of coordination and collaboration with others, as well as how quickly a group of people can form a bond and grow close. The hardest thing was learning how to not lean on my strengths and instead distribute the work of each task equally amongst each other in order for everyone to work together on all sorts of tasks. In a way, that was also the most enjoyable aspect of the experience, as I discovered new qualities and skills in myself.

5 - Describe how you have/or would create an environment for your residents that is welcoming, inclusive and supports a sense of belonging?

As a person from a diverse background, I have the ability to connect well with those around me quickly. Born in the US and having lived a half of my life both in Chicago and later in Puerto Rico, I have been exposed to and grown under a myriad of cultures. As a person from the Middle East, I am deeply connected to Arab culture and traditions. All of this has led me to be able to speak three languages: English, Arabic, and Spanish. My many experiences have given me the ability to connect easily with people, regardless of background, because my experiences will always allow me to find common ground or characteristics that can be bonded over. I will make sure to impose guidelines on all residents to help ensure everyone treats those around them with respect. I will create an environment of trust and ease, ensuring residents feel comfortable enough to come and talk to me about any situation they are going through and reach out to those I think may be struggling with something. Even if it is a situation I feel I’m not equipped to handle, I will try to understand to the best of my abilities and help the resident get connected with helpful campus or outside resources.

6 - RAs must plan events to create opportunities for residents to engage with each other. Share an example of your creativity. How do you think you could add value to planning a team event. If you have planned an event on GTs campus through a student organization, community council, RA or other group, feel free to share that experience directly.

As an involved member of the GT Muslim Student Association, I have spent the past semester improving my abilities in team building, problem-solving, and people skills. During my involvement with the MSA, I have helped plan activities that range from small events like a movie night, board game night, or candle painting to more extensive org activities with a big attendance like an Alumni Dinner, Barbecue and Sports game night, and Bonfire night. These activities always involve weeks of planning ahead of them as well as working with a group of 5-8 other people. These activities eventually have inevitable and unexpected problems that require quick thinking and last-minute problem-solving. I plan to utilize my experience coordinating events for large groups of people in my future role as an RA and successfully implement the type of activities my residents would enjoy the most. I plan to introduce frequent small events such as a weekly movie night or board game/trivia night, as those can be enjoyable stress-relieving activities many students can use to take a break from their studies. I also hope to introduce activities that will allow the residents to build deeper relationships with each other and connect on a more personal level. One example is a show and tell activity, where residents bring a belonging they feel represents them and get to talk a little about themselves, as well as

7 - Optional: Are you interested in working with a specific living-learning program or resident population? If so, which one and why?

I am most interested in working in a resident population with apartment style housing options. Specifically, resident halls like Crecine, Nelson Shell, or North Ave. As a rising third year, I feel like that is where I will meet students who are most likely at a similar stage in their Tech experience. I believe having a level of relatability like that will allow me to become more connected to my residents and in turn make me a more relatable and understanding RA. Additionally, I would enjoy having a kitchen in my living space as I am a person who enjoys cooking and would like a more easily accessible kitchen than what is offered in the traditional and suite housing options. Another resident hall I am interested in is Harris. As a transfer student, I believe the experiences I’ve gained would be a helpful tool as an RA to other newly transferred students. Being an RA for a residence hall like Harris would also allow me the chance to connect with other transfer students.