

# **Peter Erickson**

1. What made you decide to apply to work for Housing and Residential Life? What skills and experiences make you a great candidate for this position?

I applied for a position at Housing and Residential Life because I value the lifelong connections I have made over the past year and the opportunities living on campus has provided me. The college experience is incomplete without dorm life. This next year, I want to facilitate meaningful relationships and experiences for new and returning students.

I am a great candidate for the Community assistant role because of my extensive experience with community building and leadership. These qualities have been honed through various roles, including my time as a SALT leader at Lutherhaven Ministries CDA. In this position, I focused on building strong relationships with different camp groups and facilitating positive and enriching experiences for them at Camp Lutherhaven. Furthermore, my experience in childcare at my church has provided me with valuable skills in working effectively with a wide variety of students, adapting my approach to their individual needs, and fostering a supportive environment. One of the most helpful volunteer opportunities I was a part of was working at Blessings under the bridge, I was able to broaden my overall understanding of community dynamics, which exposed me to different cultures and states of mind and challenged me to make connections and work alongside individuals from different backgrounds to create inclusive and supportive communities.

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2. Tell us about a time when you faced conflict within a group (friends, family, youth group, group project, work, etc.) and how you addressed it. What did you learn from this experience?

During my freshman year of high school, the COVID-19 pandemic made school social life almost impossible. I knew many students were feeling isolated, just like me. I, like so many other students, was depressed and had no way to contact others outside a Zoom meeting chat. So, I decided to do something about it. I created a Discord server for our class. Discord is a platform where people can chat through text and voice calls in different virtual spaces. Within three days, the entire freshman class had joined. After two weeks, all 75 students in the freshman class were members. By the end of the year, 80% of the entire school, which had 250 students had signed up and were actively chatting on the platform. Our school counselor told me that our freshman class was recovering socially better than any other school in the district. This was great, but having so many people in one place led to some problems, mainly political disagreements. People with different political views started to clash. As the server owner, I faced a dilemma: should I add more rules or keep the server open? I had always been taught to value freedom of speech, but I wondered when that right started to cause problems. I needed to find a way to create a fair experience for everyone without limiting others. My solution was to create a separate space for political discussions, away from the main chat rooms. This worked very well. We moved the intense political debates to a dedicated area. This didn't bother most of the group, who simply wanted to discuss memes and classroom fails. From this experience, I learned that it's essential to understand and provide an outlet for others' points of view and emotions. That meant providing a dedicated space for people with similar viewpoints to feel safe and respected.

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3. What does diversity mean to you? How would you promote an inclusive climate within your community?

Diversity means building a community where everyone feels accepted and understood, regardless of their background. To make our community more inclusive, I would start by encouraging open and respectful conversations where we can all share our unique and different viewpoints. Learning about other cultures through events and discussions is essential. It's also crucial that everyone has the same opportunities and access to support within our community. To grow together, we must think about our biases and listen to others and their experiences. When disagreements happen, we can learn from them by addressing them constructively. We should celebrate what makes each person unique. Also, we must commit to developing diversity, equity, and inclusion around the Eastern Washington University campus. This will help us build a stronger and more connected community.

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4. What feedback (personal, academic, or work) have you received that was difficult to hear and why? What did you learn from this experience?

My involvement in audio video at church has grown immensely over the past five years. I've moved from clicking "next" on the slide deck to developing and implementing complex solutions tailored to our organization's needs. A recent example was installing our new lighting system, a project in which I played a key role. Putting together the new lighting system at the church was a significant step up from just hitting the next slide button. After a long day of setting up the hardware, I took the lead on the software side. Weeks later, during a Sunday service, I guided our lighting tech on how to use the new system. Things took a turn when Bob, the lead tech, started giving instructions. I reacted poorly, letting my emotions get the better of me with a rushed and unthought-out response.

My father later told me that my reaction was foolish and that I needed to learn to control my impulses. This was tough to hear. However, Bob and I later talked over lunch and shared our concerns. I learned a valuable lesson from this experience. While advocating for your work and knowledge is essential, doing so should always be done calmly and thoughtfully, focusing on the overall goal rather than immediate emotions. I also realized the importance of respecting established authority, even when there are disagreements, and ultimately following the leader's direction.