

HOUSING SURVEY

CAMPUS HOUSING: Finding the Balance

2016

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COLLEGE PLANNING & MANAGEMENT RECENTLY SURVEYED COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY HOUSING ADMINISTRATORS TO FIND OUT WHAT CHALLENGES THEY ARE FACING, THE STATE OF THEIR FACILITIES AND WHAT IMPROVEMENTS THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THEIR RESIDENTIAL LIFE PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES. HERE ARE SOME OF THE RESULTS OF THAT SURVEY.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE. AGING FACILITIES. AGING INFRASTRUCTURE. AFFORDABILITY. FUNDING. AND DID WE MENTION DEFERRED MAINTENANCE? When *College Planning & Management* asked campus housing directors and administrators “What is the one issue that concerns you most right now, and why?” a full one-third of respondents answered that aging facilities, infrastructure and/or deferred maintenance comprise their primary concern. With 80 percent of respondents to the survey indicating that they are not planning to open any new residence halls in 2016-2017, it’s clear that the condition of existing facilities on the campuses of colleges and universities across the country needs attention, which requires staff, funding and time (also itemized as concerns for survey respondents).

Stand these issues against rumors, reports and reviews of luxury resort-style amenities being included into some new housing facilities in order to lure students — including indoor/outdoor fireplaces, coffee bars, swimming pools, saunas, fitness centers, movie theaters, game rooms, putting greens, high-speed Internet and private shuttles — and campus housing administrators find themselves walking a tightrope stretched over what they can realistically provide and what students (and their parents) want or expect.

Space. Too Much? Too Little? Just Enough?

Depending on where you look for statistics, the number of students enrolling in colleges or universities is increasing, decreasing or remaining





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about the same. Regardless of those trends, campus housing is a marketing tool for institutions looking to draw students to and keep them on campus. Schools need to offer sufficient beds and accompanying amenities. Too much real estate tied up in residence halls that are under-occupied is a drain on budgets and resources, but not having sufficient space for potential and current students might cause those students to move along to an institution that can meet their desires as well as their needs. Are there sufficient beds available today?

When *CP&M* last surveyed housing administrators in 2013, 57 percent responded that they had sufficient residence hall space, while 35 percent indicated they had too little and only 8 percent felt they had too much. In 2016, the answers were comparable, with 54 percent indicating they have sufficient space, 38 percent (a 3 percent increase) indicating too little, and again, 8 percent indicating too much. Considering that fully 80 percent of the 2016 respondents saying they are not planning to add new residence halls in 2016-2017 — up from 66 percent in 2013 — and close to 40 percent of these saying they do not have sufficient space, there appears to be a disconnect and a considerable number of missed opportunities to keep students on campus and, as a result, fully engaged in the opportunities provided by on-campus living.

And yet, 77 percent of the 2016 respondents indicated that their institutions do, in fact, actively campaign to keep students in campus housing. In order to do so, attractive options must be available and affordable.

What's Underway

For the 20 percent of survey respondents who do have new residence facilities in the works for 2016-2017, 70 percent of those facilities will be owned and operated by the college or university. Just under 7 percent will be owned and operated by a private developer, while around 20 percent will be owned by a private developer but operated by the college or university. This form of public-private partnership used to establish needed campus housing is becoming more common as

institutions seek out economical ways to increase the number of beds available while working with strained housing budgets.

The main purpose of the new projects in the works is close to evenly split between increasing the number of beds available (50 percent) and replacing existing facilities (57 percent). Two other reasons cited for building new residence halls are to improve the college/university's marketability and to recruit new students (21 percent) and keep current students living on campus (also 21 percent).

However, even if new facilities are not in progress, the looming specter of deferred maintenance, along with routine maintenance, renovations and upgrades are keeping housing administrators busy. In the 2013 survey, 47 percent of respondents had renovations underway, while 20 percent indicated renovations had been put on hold due to budget constraints and 33 percent had no major renovations planned. In 2016, a small uptick indicates that now 51 percent of respondents have renovations in progress, while an almost equally small drop (17 percent) have renovations on hold due to budget constraints. And again, just about one-third of respondents have no major renovations planned.

That increase in the number of facilities being renovated rather than being built from scratch is confirmed by Jordan Gatewood, AIA, LEED-BD+C, senior associate for Mackey Mitchell Architects in St. Louis. "We see more focus on renovation, or at least more robust exploration of facility renovation options through master planning, facility assessments and feasibility studies," he observes. "We believe this is tied to increased scrutiny of resource utilization as campuses decide whether to renovate or build new. In our experience, the vast majority of the buildings constructed roughly 50 years ago were built with quality materials. While envelope, plumbing and mechanical systems are generally beyond their useful life spans, the 'bones' of these buildings are still good, with structural systems that afford enough flexibility for interior renovations reflecting current residential trends."

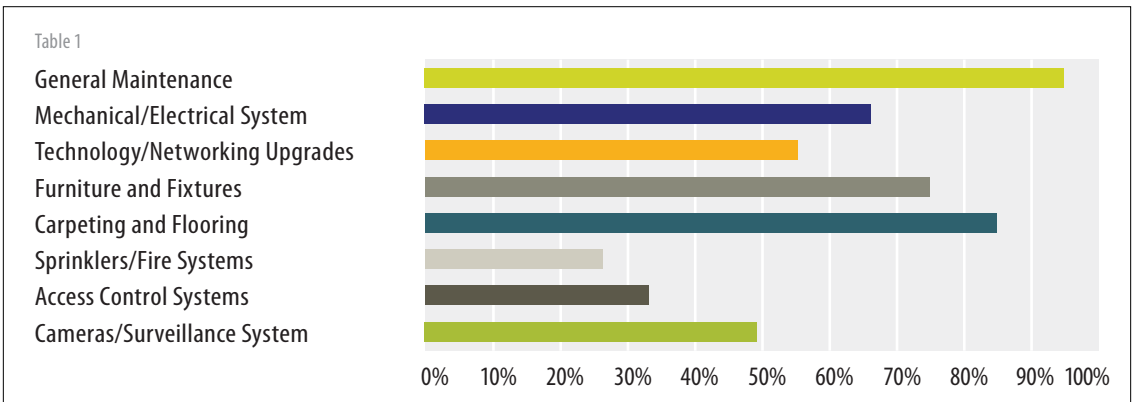


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Table 1 indicates the types of renovations or upgrades that are underway or planned for the next three to five years. A full 94 percent of respondents indicate that general maintenance, painting and repair are on the agenda. Just over 84 percent of respondents say carpeting and flooring replacement are necessary or in the works, and almost 75 percent are planning or undertaking furniture and fixtures replacement. The general consensus is that students are often hard on housing; keeping up appearances with general/routine maintenance of walls, floors, furniture and fixtures is a vital minimum to keep residence hall spaces functional and appealing to new and returning occupants.

What’s in a Residence Hall? What Should Be?

There is no “one size fits all” option available, under construction, nor on the drawing boards that defines the ideal residence hall. There are, however, common and/or popular amenities that are included or desired across the board. In 2013, 83 percent of respondents indicated that their residence hall spaces included central laundry facilities. In 2016, that number increased to 93 percent. In 2013, 47 percent indicated the existence of full-service central kitchens; a slight increase to 49 percent in 2016 indicates little change. It’s interesting to note that in 2013, 41 percent of respondents indicated that existing or planned residence facilities included kitchens in





residential rooms/suites, while in 2016 that number dropped to only 29 percent.

Dining halls within a residential facility? In 2013, 29 percent responded in the affirmative. That number jumped to 37 percent in 2016. Classroom spaces were indicated for 29 percent of facilities in 2013; three years later, that has increased incrementally to 32 percent. See Table 2, below.

Asked to imagine the ideal residence hall, the 2016 survey respondents offered up opinions on very concrete yet diverse configurations — “no inside hallways;” “double loaded corridor with living rooms on the floors;” “single bedrooms, possible single bathrooms per student, maintain cooking within each unit, programming/group space;” “single-room suites with 2-4 students sharing, 2 bathrooms and a kitchenette facility;” “3-4 star hotel, including all the personal amenities;” “luxury hotel” — but overwhelmingly indicated facilities that included areas for “community,” “living/learning,” “interaction,” “so-

Do your current or planned residence hall spaces include...	2013	2016
Central kitchen	47%	49%
Central laundry facilities	83%	93%
Classroom spaces	29%	32%
Club-style fitness centers	11%	12%
Co-ed rooms	16%	22%
Coffee shops	13%	10%
Convenience stores	23%	17%
Dining hall	29%	37%
Faculty offices	13%	15%
Family housing	14%	12%
Kitchen in rooms/suites	41%	29%
Maid services	6%	2%
Retail spaces	8%	10%
Swimming pools	3%	7%
Washer/dryer in rooms/suites	12%	15%

cialization,” and over and over again, “community.” The ideal space, housing directors agree, promotes cooperation, collaboration and interaction amongst its residents.

This need is not overlooked by the architects designing today’s residence halls. Gary Schilling, AIA, LEED-BD+C, principal with BAR Architects in San Francisco, has been responsible for a variety of student housing and related projects for a number of institutions and serves on the Design Review Board for UC Davis. He agrees with the responses to *CP&M*’s survey. “The increased emphasis on group study and active learning shapes the living environment as well as the classroom,” Schilling says. “Flexible collaborative spaces and classrooms in residential learning communities are integral to this approach.”

Commenting on expected amenities, Tom Anagnos, AIA, LEED-AP, project designer for Hastings+Chivetta, says, “Features like WiFi, cable television and laundry rooms are viewed by students as ‘bare minimum’ amenities and must be included in each facility.”

Student wellness, both physical and mental/emotional, is increasingly noted as a concern of survey respondents. In listing what one issue concerns them the most right now, survey respondent comments included “how mental health and alcohol use issues impact student retention/progression,” “mental health and other disability accommodations,” “lack of coping skills in students,” “needy students who expect the institution to be the principal provider of mental health accommodations,” and “how mentally fragile students are.” Gatewood sees the impact of this concern as well. “We are starting to see a greater emphasis on the importance of student wellness (particularly emotional well being) and design strategies that support positive outcomes,” he says. “Some campuses are including counselors-in-residence who act as conduits between residents and campus health and psychological services.”

Does Size Matter? The Budget Says ‘Yes.’

If the ideal residence hall includes spaces for learning, collaboration, socialization and interaction, does that imply that the facilities overall are increasing in size and, therefore, cost, as they become more programmatically diverse? Not necessarily.

“BAR’s clients are looking to minimize the square footage of individual dwelling rooms but increase the square footage per person for collaborative and community

spaces,” Schilling says. “This reallocation of space responds both to rising construction costs as well as the increased emphasis on collaboration and socialization.”

Gatewood agrees. “If the project is catering to upperclassmen with the privacy and independence of apartment style units, the square footage per bed trends upward,” he says. “If the project is focused on lower division students, the emphasis is on community. Even with a generous allotment of community spaces, the square footage per bed trends downward for buildings tailored to these students. We see most institutions looking for opportunities to reduce the square footage per bed in response to current construction cost trends, thereby being as efficient as possible... area = dollars.”

The eyes of housing directors remain firmly focused on budget. When asked to rate the impact of a number of issues on housing at their institutions in the next 3-5 years, the five issues ranked as having the most profound impact were aging facilities, deferred maintenance, lack of adequate funds, need for upgraded/modernized facilities and student/parent expectations. Except perhaps for student/parent expectations, the top four are directly related to financial considerations. See Table 3, below.

It Comes Down to the Students

Our 2016 survey respondents agree on one thing: there is no one ideal residence hall as far as configuration of space,

amenities and support services is concerned. While one sees a movement away from apartment-style accommodations to double-occupancy rooms, another sees the opposite. Decisions may be made to offer freshmen and sophomores more communal spaces and the double-occupancy or suite-style rooms while offering upperclassmen and graduate students more apartment- and townhome-style options to aid in transitioning them to the “real world” after graduation.

Also taken into consideration is the frequent creation of communities based on a living/learning focus — specific facilities for performing arts students, for example, or student-athletes or first-generation students — or accommodations for international students, or even resident faculty.

“It is important to have a mix — not all living arrangements suit all students — buildings and rooms may need to become more modular and flexible in design,” one survey respondent explains. “Students are in class 15-18 hours of the 168 hours in a week and many are away from home for the first time. For these reasons, student housing plays an important role in retention,” says another.

And ultimately, hand-in-hand with serving and supporting the students is attention to costs and budget. “Given increasing construction costs and the desire for greater amenities, the efficiency of the building and the housing units are critical,” Anagnos says. “The need and desire for greater space is carefully balanced against the cost per bed. This is especially important when competing against private developer apartment housing.”

Campus housing directors are on the front lines, working out the balance between student/parent wants and needs; institutional budgets; what can be accomplished realistically and what cannot; and keeping existing facilities up and running, attractive, functional and safe. In the face of the ongoing challenges, they’re succeeding. “[Residence life on our campus] has improved tremendously in the last decade,” comments one of the survey respondents.

Challenges met. **CPM**

CP&M would like to thank the housing directors who responded to our 2016 survey. The survey data was collected from 53 colleges and universities (47 four-year, six two-year; 32 public, 20 nonprofit, one for-profit) representing 31 states. A total of 675 residential facilities are located on the campuses of and/or managed by the respondents. In addition, CP&M thanks ACUHO-I for soliciting its members to provide feedback to the survey.

Table 3	
Percentage of survey respondents who rated these issues as having the most profound impact on housing at their institutions in the next 3-5 years:	
Aging facilities	40%
Deferred maintenance	36%
Lack of adequate funds	32%
Need for upgraded/modernized facilities	30%
Student/parent expectations	30%
Cost to students	26%
Mental health issues	25%
Staying competitive with off-campus housing	16%
Keeping beds filled	13%
Civility/entitlement issues	11%
Overcrowding	10%
Drug and alcohol abuse	9%
Staffing issues	6%
Security concerns	4%

AND SUSTAINABILITY?



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EDRC COLLEGIATE HOUSING

CP&M ASKED THE EXPERTS WHO DESIGN campus residential facilities how important sustainability is to the institutions they work with.

“Sustainability is not an option; it is a given,” responds Julie M. Skolnicki, AIA,

LEED-AP, senior vice president of university partnerships for EdR Collegiate Housing. “One-hundred percent of our on-campus student housing projects meet LEED Silver standards and many have received LEED Gold. We are constantly evaluating new

sustainable technology and products, and we try to implement those that are most suitable to each site and environment. For example, we have used geothermal heating and cooling at the University of Kentucky and sustainably sources timbers construction SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF).”

“Students, staff and the administration are interested and committed to sustainability in housing. Monitoring energy and water use with digital read-outs on public dashboards or via apps gives everyone a stake in not just the design but in learning how a student’s day-to-day life in a residence hall impacts natural resources and the environment,” says Gary Schilling, AIA, LEED-BD+C.

Jordan Gatewood, AIA, LEED-BD+C, agrees. “Sustainable buildings designed with energy-efficient systems, achieved through careful planning and diverse input from all stakeholders, is consistently considered a hallmark of a successful project,” he explains. ■



ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME. The concept of the living/learning environment continues to gain popularity in residence hall design, as facilities are configured to include classrooms and meeting rooms in addition to the requisite bedrooms, laundry facilities, kitchens and lounge spaces. To keep costs under control, designers are seeing a trend in decreasing square footage in bedrooms in order to increase the size of communal areas such as the classrooms and other shared spaces.

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