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**UO University Housing – Residence Halls Survey
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UO UNIVERSITY HOUSING - RESIDENCE HALLS SURVEY

Executive Summary

Housing can play a key role in promoting student success, building community on campus, promoting diversity, serving as an anchor for learning communities, assisting with institutional enrollment goals, and providing a focal point for collaboration between various parts of the university.

-Mike Eyster, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Housing Director for the University of Oregon

Introduction

The intent of University Housing is not merely to provide UO students with a convenient place to sleep and store belongings; rather residence hall facilities and programs are an important resource that enhances academic learning and fosters maturation and progression toward effectiveness in life after graduation.

Because of this importance of housing in a student's academic life, including the substantial influence on-campus housing has on university or college choice (see below), University Housing felt it useful to undertake a survey of residents to determine, among other things, student preferences and opinions. This type of survey has been conducted periodically over the last five years in an ongoing effort to gather data that can help drive building and facilities decisions.

Current Status of University Housing at the University of Oregon

The recent (2006) construction of the Living-Learning Center marked the end of the first phase in a multi-phase endeavor to renovate or replace residential facilities on the University of Oregon campus. Although the Living-Learning Center provided the first new student housing in the central area of campus since 1963, it did nothing to address the problem of the existing outdated facilities. With 387 beds, the Living-Learning Center only houses approximately 10 percent of the students living on campus.

National Trends in University Housing

Because of the influence of housing options on a potential student's choice of higher-education institutions, it's instructive to briefly review national trends in university housing. The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I), is a professional association that helps its members respond to the challenges in college and university housing. The association has been conducting biannual surveys of its member institutions to determine the scope of new construction and renovations of residence halls across the nation. According to 2003 data, more than 75 percent of respondents indicated that their institution currently had a campus-wide master plan and/or strategic plan that included construction and/or renovation plans for residential facilities. Additionally, there were 88 institutions with 113 new construction projects for residential facilities between 2001 and 2003.

According to an ACUHO-I document called *College Housing 2005 Special Report*:

“The need for more and better facilities, the cost to students, and budget cuts that affect maintenance and operations are considered the major issues facing chief housing officers through the next five years. It is going to be difficult to meet the demands for upgrading while holding costs and dealing with budgets.”

The report also noted that more than one-third of the colleges reporting have residence hall construction underway now, and almost as many expect to get started within the next five years.

Clearly, the need and demand for upgraded residential facilities in the shadow of financial challenges is not unique to the University of Oregon. However, it is critical that Oregon not be left behind in the trend to improve on-campus housing options or it risks mitigating the influence that housing has on the educational process as well as the loss of valuable admissions.

UO Residence Halls Survey

The goal of the UO Residence Halls survey was to collect data from three student populations:

- Prospective students who have indicated an interest in UO, but have not yet applied.
- Current students living in a UO residence hall during the 2006-07 school year for the first time.
- Multi-year residents who have lived in UO residence halls in the previous years and returned during the 2006-07 school year.

The voluntary e-mail survey was conducted between Jan. 16 through 29, 2007. These results analyze the 983 responses of 11,838 current and prospective student invited to participate. A response rate of 8% brings a strong level of confidence in the validity of the survey; in comparison, typical voluntary reply surveys yield about a 5% response rate. Three separate questionnaires were fielded; one for each sample segment. The survey questions were open-ended, designed to encourage detailed responses and provide top-of-mind thoughts related to direct experiences.

Key Survey Findings

- Approximately 50% of the respondents said that residence hall facilities factor into their university or college selection. In their own words, respondents said:

How much the resident hall would feel like home for me. When I view a room, I am able to ask myself, “Can I live and study here in this environment?”

On-campus housing that reflects community. Unique and aware housing options of the dorms.

If buildings were too outdated (difficult to study/do homework in), too far from classes (more than a 10 minute walk), etc.

- Room size is the dominant issue for all students when asked about what makes a residence hall appealing, what the university should consider in new buildings, and as a factor that could influence a student's decision to attend a university or college. A few representative remarks:

The size of the rooms. Small and cramped rooms can be seriously depressing...

Size of rooms, cost, niceness, bathrooms, eating facilities.

- An overwhelming number of students who currently live in UO residence halls and prospective students who are considering attending UO want what only 10% of the current student population can have.; i.e., residence in the Living-Learning Center. What some students like about the LLC:

EVERYTHING.

It's on campus, it's new, and it lives up the standard of current living style for normal individuals.

It is new and it was designed really well. Plus I like the style and idea behind the building.

Big... roomy. It has separate study rooms in every hall; multiple halls on one floor; it's co ed.

It is a new facility and I'm sure a great deal of thought was put into its development being such. I also like the idea of having classes in the same building, you can just roll out of bed.

The fact that everything is at one's fingertips- food, study rooms, bedrooms. It seems like it would always be an active, exciting community.

- Families play a significant role in the decision about university housing. Most prospective students are encouraged to live in a residence hall by their families. Below are two perspectives on this topic:

Because it is my first time to live without my family, housing was so important when I chose the university where I would study for one-year. The comfort ability is the most influential one.

I want to meet new friends and my Dad and brother who are both UO alumni said it is the best way to get a great start in the system.

There is a new generation of college students making college choices by utilizing many more research tools than the traditional college visit, magazine rankings among them:

Whether they are ranked in 'dorms like palaces' or 'dorms like dungeons'.

Respondent Summary

➤ **Prospective Students – 377 respondents**

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents are female and 42% are male, and most are 18 or 19 years old. Approximately 6% of these respondents began the survey, but did not complete the questionnaire and are not counted in statistical results.

- On the prospective resident wish list, LLC (42%), Barnhart (22%) and Carson (11%) are the most popular residence halls.
- If the UO builds a new residence hall, prospective students agree that the following five factors are most important:

Room Size	35%
Location	23%
Design	9%
Bathrooms	8%
Amenities	5%
- 56% of respondents are encouraged by parents and/or family members to live in a residence hall once they get to college.

➤ **Current Residents – 543 respondents**

This was the largest sample at 543 responses, with 67% female and 33% male. The majority of the respondents are 18 or 19 years old. Approximately 3% of these respondents began the survey, but did not complete the questionnaire and are not counted in the statistical results.

- 46% of current residents feel that their building is “about the same” as other residential buildings at UO. This means that first-year dorm residents see a flat comparison between UO residence halls relative to their own selection. This is likely reflective of the fact that only 10% of current residents are living in the Living-Learning Center and that most are living in residence halls built before the 1960s.
- Room size, age of building and room amenities dominate the reasons why 31% of current residents feel their dorm is significantly better than the others.
- The 19% of current residents who said their dorm is significantly worse cited reasons such as room size, age of building and location.
- For the 46% that residence hall facilities would impact their university choice, room size is the most influential factor.

➤ **Multi-Year Students — 61 respondents**

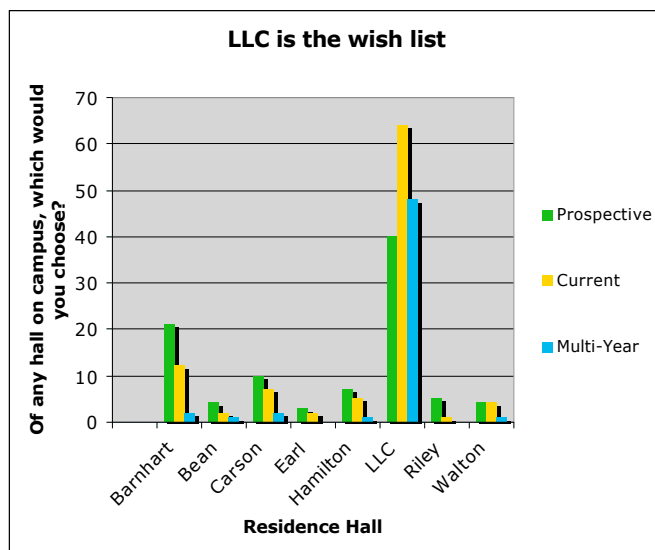
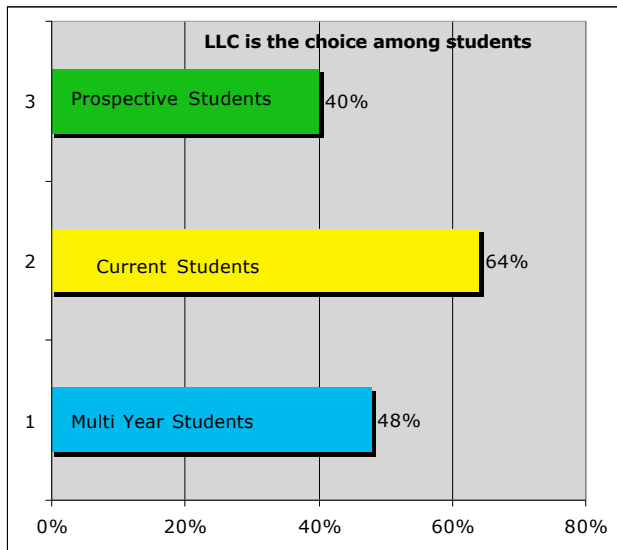
This was the smallest sample size as there are few returning upperclassmen to residence hall life. Most respondents are 19 or 20 years of age, 46% are male and 51% female. Approximately 3% of the respondents began the survey, but did not complete the questionnaire and are not counted in statistical results.

- 56% of the respondents reported that their current residence hall is significantly better than other residential buildings at the UO. Of these, 51% live in LLC, 14% in Barnhart and 11% each in Carson and Walton.
- 48% would choose LLC over any other hall on campus because it is new, more modern and has larger room size.
- Room size and location are the dominant factors to multi-year residents in comparing existing residence hall options, impacting the decision to attend a university, and in recommendations for possible new buildings at UO.

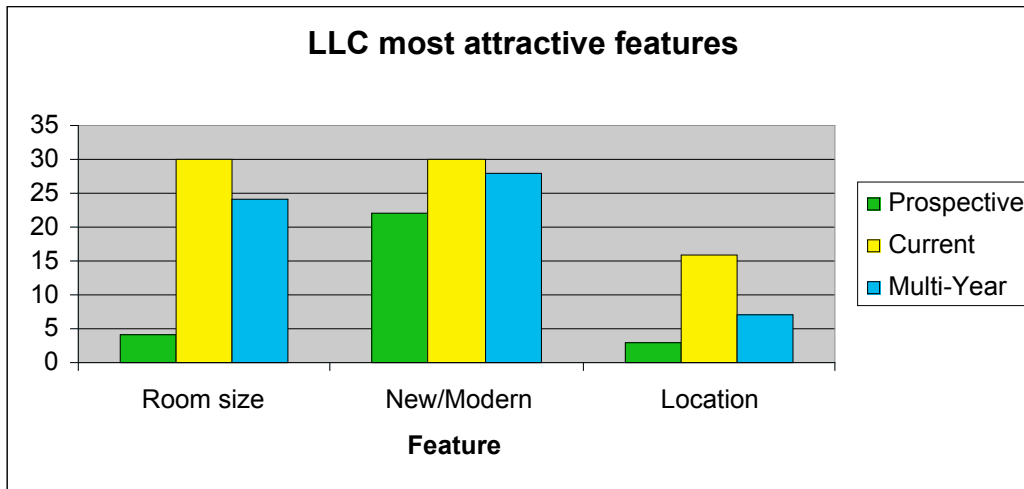
Overall Comments

➤ **LLC is on everyone’s wish list**

The LLC is the clear favorite among students and prospective students, yet LCC provides only 10% of the room inventory available in the UO residence hall system.



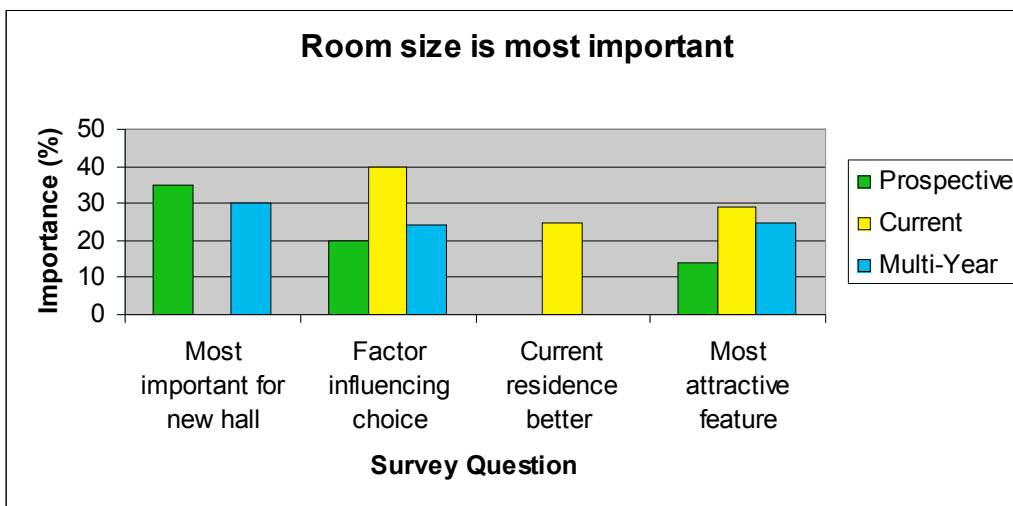
What do you like most about LLC?



➤ **Room size makes a difference**

In every question that respondents were asked what factors play into their decision making when comparing residence halls, room size is consistently one of the most important factors.

Further, room size is the most attractive feature for students who put LLC at the top of their wish list. Substantiated through several questions on the survey, “room size” is a key factor that students consider when making a college choice and/or deciding between living on or off campus.



CONCLUSION

Based on comments from all three populations, University Housing now has solid information to build a road map for developing new and/or renovating existing residence hall facilities. The data collected directly reflects current and prospective student opinions and preferences and the open-ended nature of the questions achieved the stated goal to facilitate and encourage top-of-mind responses.

In conclusion, the survey tells the story of how important residence halls are to prospective and current students, what students like about the existing residence halls, their extraordinary satisfaction with the LLC, and what future students will look for when they apply.

Living and Learning

The LLC, or the features it provides, dominate the responses to every question. The UO should be congratulated on construction and integration of the Living-Learning Center residence hall. Universally, students like the room size, building layout and location. Many respondents also highlight the moveable furniture and study lounges/common areas throughout the building.

The university did a great job.

It is brand new. The furniture can be moved around, the windows are huge, it has beautiful study rooms, and the color scheme is very modern/trendy.

The Living Learning Center or LLC is the newest building and I've heard that the rooms are beautiful, and they are a bit bigger than the other halls.

Respondents suggest a preference for a contemporary living style that incorporates residential space with their education. A frequent phrase mentioned is “living and learning”, especially among the prospective students. This model, if repeated in new construction or remodeling of existing residence halls, has the potential to attract more students to the University.

The ability of the residential housing to further or better my academic excellence.

It combines living and learning together which is necessary part of university life.

The challenge for UO will be that this residence hall can only accommodate 10% of the on-campus student population. Looking ahead, the University should be aware that having an inequitable supply of such a popular demand could have unintended consequences to recruit new students and/or to maintain satisfaction among existing students. One prospective student sums it up this way:

If I'm going to be living there for a good majority of the next four years of my life, I would like to live comfortably. Dirty, moldy uncomfortable dorms like Bean would not be a good fit for me.

Well if the facilities were unlivable, than it would take away some of my interest in attending that school.

If I was not put in a residence hall that i felt comfortable in, I would go to another university.

Room Size and Location

Similar to the popularity of LLC, room size and location dominate the responses of students when asked what feature is most important or why a particular residence hall is preferred over another.

Room size, attractive and inviting spaces with lots of light.

This is an important message for future facility planning. Students now perceive college as an expected and first step in their adult lives, rather than as an opportunity that previous generations had the privilege to achieve. Students also are influenced by the multitude of information channels received through television, movies, Web sites, peer communication — and whether realistic or not, have expectations that college living is spacious and roomy.

Responses also showed clearly that location is an important factor; that the ideal residence hall is close to classes, dining options and athletic facilities. “Being close to everything on campus” is a consistent response stated throughout the surveys.

The Next Generation

The LLC was a strong first step of the multi-phase strategy to replace the more than four decades old existing residence halls. When asked if they could live in any residence on campus, 42% of prospective, 66% of current and 48% of multi-year residents agreed that LLC topped their wish list. These percentages show by themselves the success of the LLC and the challenge the University will need to consider to provide similar options in the future.

This survey confirms that the LLC concept, design and integration surpasses student expectations, sets a precedent for future new or renovation construction, and as a result, could have a positive impact on admissions to the University.

The living learning center is ideal.