



2008 RAB Report

A Critical Examination of the College House System at the
University of Pennsylvania

Residential Advisory Board

June 9, 2008

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Purpose of the RAB Report

In this report, we seek to highlight the most salient issues facing the Houses collectively and individually in order to better the undergraduate residential experience. This report serves as a critical examination of the entire College House system from a student perspective. We encourage students and staff members who would like to share additional thoughts, concerns, or suggestions to contact us.

Who We Are

The Residential Advisory Board (RAB) is a student-run organization that aims to promote inter-house communication and events as well as advise the administration on issues affecting undergraduate residents. Issues to be addressed by RAB include, but are not limited to: house competitions, special programs, renovations, housing contracts, maintenance and facilities, development of future College Houses, and security precautions.

RAB seeks to be the voice of College House residents; because our general body is entirely comprised of students who live in the College Houses, we feel uniquely equipped to provide feedback to administrations like CHAS and HCS about the opinions of residents. We aim to advise these organizations on the needs of College House residents, to promote inter-House activities and events that foster House community, and to involve College House residents in their Houses and with the campus community. As an organization, we work closely with administrators within CHAS and HCS, College House Deans and faculty, as well as other organizations such as the UA, Penn for UNICEF, and the Penn Environmental Group. Our goal is to continue to act as a voice for students in the College Houses and as an organization for change and improvement.

Structure

The RAB general body is comprised of two representatives from each of the eleven College Houses. In addition, there are two representatives from off-campus living and one representative from Sansom Place. There are weekly general body meetings that occur in all of the College Houses on a rotating basis.

The RAB Executive Board is comprised of five members: the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary-Treasurer, the Webmaster and the College House Cup Coordinator. The Executive Board meets every week in order to plan upcoming events and discuss the feedback of general body members during our weekly meetings.

RAB is uniquely positioned to represent the interests of College House residents because our general body has representatives who live in every House. Not only do RAB reps have regular interaction with their House Deans, but they are also able to experience firsthand the things that make each House unique, as well as any problems within the Houses. RAB reps can elicit feedback from their hall-mates and bring them directly to general body meetings.

RAB's composition gives us a great understanding of the differences between all of the College Houses, as well as specific improvements that need to be made in each one. Our open flow of communication with College House residents allows us to confidently make recommendations on issues that affect the undergraduate population.

Future Goals

We are hoping to become more of an "advisory" board in the future. While we think that planning events for College House residents is worthwhile, we would like to capitalize on our

positions within the College Houses by providing advice to administrators on issues that affect undergraduate residents. The recommendations that we give will be strengthened by the fact that all of our members live in the College Houses and we can solicit feedback from residents.

RAB is also seeking to work more with the UA on issues that affect undergraduate life. We have already established a good relationship with the UA's Housing Council: together, we collaborated on a survey about academic support services at Penn. We are also discussing how the Returning Students Housing application process can be changed to make it easier for College House residents to stay in the College House system.

We would like to work with CHAS and HCS to formulate a better move-out policy for the 2008-2009 academic year. This year, there were students who had exams that ended at 8 pm on May 13th, but had to move out by noon on May 14th. RAB feels that this turn-around time is too short, and that it forces students to choose between studying and packing. RAB would like to be involved in any process, or considerations about a policy change, that would prevent this situation from arising in the future.

Accomplishments

College House Week

In late April, RAB organized and ran the second-annual College House Week, in which there was an event almost every night. All of the events were open to all members of the Penn community, but the College House with the most participation received points in the College House Cup standings. Events included a burrito eating contest, a "Penn Traditions Quizzo," a dodge ball tournament, and a College House "Bake-Off" that took place in 1920 Commons with the generous support of Penn Dining. Overall, this week was a success in both providing the students with fun events as well as increasing awareness of College House Cup and RAB.

College House Video

In October, three members of RAB's Communications Committee (Tom Estabrook, Stephanie Joco, and Carly Levitz) started the process of making a video about housing. The goal was to create videos that would give incoming students an opportunity to make a more informed decision about where to live. In all, there are 11 videos, one for each College House. These videos went online in April in time for incoming students to view them to help them decide which House fits them best. Each video contains footage of the inside of the College House, public spaces within the buildings, as well as interviews with current residents. These videos can be found at <http://www.collegehouses.upenn.edu/video/>. The videos have been viewed hundreds of times, between 300 to 1,400 times each.

Academic Support Services Survey

The primary accomplishments were an inventory of undergraduate Academic Support Services and a school-wide survey of undergraduate opinion of Academic Support Services. This year the committee focused on interviewing House Deans and residents on the issue, as well

as making an inventory of the different options out there for students. During the second semester, the committee collaborated with the Undergraduate Assembly to create an undergraduate student-wide survey on student perceptions on academic services.

The main purpose of this survey was to not only to identify need for such services, but also the level of awareness of services already offered. Coupling the results of the survey with interviews with residents and with House Deans done throughout the year, the committee reached several conclusions. Most importantly, we feel that there is a gap between the level of services offered and the perception of services offered. Most students expressed dissatisfaction or neutrality (6.9% very unsatisfied, 21.2% unsatisfied, 38.2% neutral) with the current services. However, we believe that this level of dissatisfaction is also affected by lack of awareness. In fact, the biggest complaint about services is insufficient advertising (38.8%). Thus, boosting awareness would be the most important step in terms of both making a fairer assessment on the quality of academic services and beginning to offer constructive ideas for improvement. For example, there is a website link on Penn Portal to introduce a myriad of services, but most students that we talked to were unaware of such a resource; a first step would be boost awareness of such a simple option. Next year, RAB will work on creating a more consistent and effective way for academic support options to be marketed to the undergraduate student body.

Another important point of discussion was a pairing-system or “buddy system” for students to find peer studying partners. This was discussed internally by the committee, and also by the Undergraduate Assembly during the second semester. Several RAB members discussed the idea with House Deans and residents to get feedback. Some expressed interest in a program especially for smaller and upper division classes, for which it is harder to find tutors. There were also negative thoughts regarding how the matching process would work. Negative scenarios are such: if two struggling students are matched up, this does not necessarily help the students. Likewise, if a moderate student is matched up with a struggling student, that first student might feel like it's a waste of time and/or even a burden. Given the difficulty of organizing a program on a large scale, it is probably not the role of a singular organization to create a program. Rather, departments or academic advisors could help students on a case-by-case basis and give more personalized support.

Penn PM Program Events

RAB continued to support the Penn PM program by planning two events: a “RecycleMania Quizzo” and a “Taboo Tournament.” The RecycleMania event, which took place in Rodin College House, was an overwhelming success. The Taboo Tournament, which centered around the popular board game “Taboo,” took place in Gregory College House and was also well-attended.

Dining

The main accomplishments of the dining committee were the establishment of strong, consistent communication with Penn Dining and the College House Week Bake-Off Collaboration. The Residential Advisory Board’s Dining Committee had a very successful year with Penn Dining. There was very steady communication between the board and Penn dining

administrators. There were several roundtable discussions throughout the year to gather feedback from other undergraduates. This increased amount of collaboration culminated with the Bake-Off event at College House week. This was the biggest event of College House Week, and brought together teams from 6 College Houses.

Although the relationship between RAB and Penn Dining has been positive, we still noticed many consistent problems with dining that need to be addressed. Both students and House Deans noted the perception of unfriendliness among the some staff members. Students believed that this was the most visible and easiest correctable problem for Penn Dining. Another common request was for Dining Dollars to be offered at more places. Finally, another common complaint was to lower prices for dining plans; students often felt that meal prices are unreasonably high and not at competitive with other food options.

The above complaints have been voiced in the past, and we believe that it is not necessary to keep harping on problems of which administrators are already aware. Instead, we believe that continued, consistent dialogue between Penn Dining and students is the best way to foster mutual understanding; solid attempts were made to achieve such communication this year, and RAB will continue to create opportunities for students to interact with Penn Dining and their staff.

Executive Summary

Ideal College House

Given that a new College House is in the process of being built, the Residential Advisory Board would like to offer our opinions on what makes for a successful College House. Our members, who come from every College house as well as Sansom Place and off-campus, held House Forums to get feedback from current residents about what works and what can be improved in the College House system. This feedback is on subsequent pages of this report.

Move-out Policy

This past year, final exams of several large classes, including OPIM 101 and CHEM 053 and 054, were on the evening of May 13th. However, the move-out deadline was noon on May 14th. The last exam would end at 8 p.m., leaving students a minimal amount of time to arrange, pack, and move out all their belongings. Many freshmen are in these classes and are not experienced in the move-out process. We, as members of the Residential Advisory Board and as representatives of College House residents, feel that the proximity of the move-out deadline to these final exams will inhibit the ability of these students to perform to the fullest of their potential. We understand that there are constraints on the administration to get the students out in a timely manner so that summer construction and cleaning can begin. However, we feel that at least one additional day is necessary for students to move out without forcing them to choose between preparing for exams and the logistics of moving out. We believe that the University should take a more active role in informing these students of the process of obtaining an extension. We also believe that because this conflict of schedules is out of the students' control, they should not be made to bear the financial burden of the extension.

College House Forums Summary

Throughout the Spring 2008 semester, RAB representatives from each of the 11 College Houses held House Forums. The Forum has been one of our most important tools for gathering qualitative data for this report. Through these forums, we have been able to elicit residents' feedback on what aspects of their College House experience they value - many of which are unique to individual houses —as well as what needs improvement. The forums were semi-structured; RAB members moderated the discussions by asking questions related to the areas outlined in this report, yet allowed the students to determine the direction of the discussion. While we recognize that the following write-ups from the Forums cannot fully reflect the diverse opinions of College House residents, they do provide a snapshot of residents' experiences in each College House.

In conducting the House Forums, RAB reps asked questions that clustered around six areas: academic support services, the College House Cup system, dining, facilities, in-House communication, and programming. Below is a summary of the feedback that was consistent across most of the College Houses in regards to these areas:

Academic Support Services

Though students were generally happy with the level of academic support at Penn, one of the main issues that students faced with tutoring is the lack of advertising and not enough choices of tutors within the College House. Students expressed the importance of having writing and introductory level course tutors and availability of tutors during exam times. Tutoring for freshmen who live in the high rises is not as prevalent as that in other Houses. Suggestions for improvement included peer tutoring with upperclassmen and collaborative study groups.

College House Cup System

The main difficulty of the College House Cup is a lack of awareness about it. Students do not know much about it in terms of what types of events it has and when those events occur. To increase awareness, RAB needs to improve marketing and/or increase incentives. Some students lose interest in, and enthusiasm for, College House Cup because it lasts for the entire year. Many students expressed the desire to have more types of events, such as international sports (e.g., cricket, rugby), sports clinics (e.g., golf, rock climbing), broomball, music quizzes, and ultimate Frisbee. At House Forums, students also suggested once-a-year events such as campus scavenger hunts. In the coming year, RAB will work on raising awareness and increasing attendance.

Dining

Many returning Penn students noted the great improvement in 1920 Commons this year, especially the greater availability of fresh fruit and the new furniture. Students report a persistent perception of unfriendliness on the part of Penn Dining staff, though this is probably the result of miscommunication on both sides. Also, students want to be able to use dining dollars in more places, especially the Moravian Food Court.

Facilities

Facilities issues appear to be most pressing for Du Bois, Stouffer, and Gregory residents, who agree that renovations for the low-rise buildings must be undertaken or completed as soon as possible. Also, residents in the Quad reported problems with pest control, especially mice.

There was an overwhelmingly negative response to the *Facilities Focus* program. Many students were frustrated with the complexity of the system. When asked if they had consulted the manual, one student noted that “if a program is so complicated that it requires a manual, something is wrong.” Other students said that they often call the emergency Facilities phone hotline, even for non-emergency issues, because it is much easier than using the online application.

In-House Communication

Within the House, email is the best way to reach students. Through listservs and emails from RAs or GAs, residents can learn about what is going on in their House. However, one concern is that students might delete emails without reading them. To minimize this, those

sending emails should make the subject line something that will hold the residents' attention. A small amount of placing posters by mailboxes, elevators, and entrances is also an effective way to get students' attention. Houses that have whiteboards and TV monitors that are updated on a regular basis have had success in advertising that way.

Programming and PennPM

We believe that House Programming is a critical component of creating a strong community within a College House. In our 2006 RAB Report, we examined the effectiveness of the Penn PM program. We felt then, as we do now, that providing alcohol-free alternative activities for Penn students is important and necessary. However, the PennPM program continues to be underutilized and under-advertised. The majority of students who provided feedback stated that they are either unaware of the program's existence, know of the program but attend none of the events, or only hear about and attend Penn PM events that are hosted in their own house.

The Ideal College House

Given that there will be a new College House on Hill Field, it is important to have feedback from current College House residents on what makes a College House great. The Residential Advisory Board has made it a goal to help in all ways possible to make this new House successful. The new College House provides a unique opportunity to set the standard for the future of the College House system.

The College House is a very significant component of the Penn undergraduate experience. Living in a College House provides students with both social and academic opportunities in a residential setting. In this section, we outline a series of recommendations based on the input of representatives from all 11 current College Houses, meetings with House Deans, and informal surveys of undergraduates. These recommendations address current plans as outlined in the “Penn Connects” website, as well as other aspects of the College House experience that we as a board feel are important for all residents.

The Residential Experience

Ideally, the College House serves as a “home away from home,” a place where residents feel comfortable both in terms of the physical space and the types of services the House offers. The physical space of the House must be one that is conducive to student life. The “Penn Connects” website reported that there would be a kitchen, a café, lounges, computer rooms, and music rooms in the new College House. RAB agrees that these amenities will help foster a sense of community in the College House. Here, we make specific recommendations on the types of rooms and facilities that should be prioritized. High attendance of social gatherings and other scheduled events is a key way to creating a sense of community, and part of promoting this sense of community is having the facilities to hold such events. Having a large auditorium or performance-like room would be an ideal addition, as it could be used for house forums, student performance groups, and other large scale events. This room would be comparable to the current roof-top lounges of the high rise College Houses, which have proven to be highly popular and effective facilities for student events. Additionally, small, reservable rooms should be created; these rooms can be used for small group meetings, discussion areas or study areas. Study rooms in Huntsman Hall and Van Pelt library are often very busy, especially during midterm and exam periods, and these rooms would be helpful for students who want to stay in their College House to study. If creating several smaller discussion rooms is not possible, one larger central library space (that could seat approximately 40-60 people) would be well-utilized. One example is the study lounge in Fisher-Hassenfeld, which has many study carrels and one small discussion room that can be reserved.

A simple but often overlooked feature to promote in-house socialization is having doors that can easily be propped open; this feature is currently offered in College Houses like Hill and the Quad Houses, but not in the High Rises.

Just as important as holding in-house events is having the physical means of promoting these activities. Placing a TV monitor in the lobby or in an area that students walk by on a daily basis is one way to gain awareness of such events. Residents in College Houses that have white boards that are updated on a weekly basis say that this is also a good way to publicize events. Penn is working toward becoming a “greener” campus, and students have expressed concern over the vast amount of paper that fliers use. Electronic and other paperless devices, integrated into a system in which student groups can advertise their events, will be very effective in promoting a greener community while providing students with effective communication outlets.

Facilities

The ability to control the temperature within individual rooms would be much appreciated, but if this is not feasible, then having a program to report facilities issues that is easily understandable and accessible to students is essential. In the feedback from the House Forums that the Residential Advisory Board conducted, students reported confusion and frustration about the “Facilities Focus” program. Another frequent facilities request is for quarter machines in the laundry rooms. Students complain about the inconvenience of having the only coin machine in their House breaking down and thus forcing a trip across campus or to another College House; this could be prevented by having more machines per House.

Dining

From the “Penn Connects” website, we realize that a dining hall has been proposed as part of the new College House on Hill Field. RAB agrees with this decision. A dining hall fosters community and gives residents a chance to socialize over meals with their hallmates and friends from across campus. According to feedback that we have received from students, guest chef nights and themed nights (such as vegan and/or vegetarian nights, local food nights, and nights where foods from other cultures have been served) are very successful. Students express concerns about the healthiness of the food options, and they would like to see more baked options as opposed to fried. Also, if dining halls were open longer, especially on the weekends, students would use them more.

Academics

The link between College House life and academics is one that should be strengthened. Part of the goal of the College House system is to provide academic programming, and a this type of programming, including academic support services (e.g. tutoring) should be a priority in developing the new College House. We have already outlined several facility recommendations which will allow a new College House to better accommodate discussion groups and academic events such as tutoring sessions. Though there is some debate about how much students will use in-House tutoring provided through organizations like “The Tutoring Center”, there are other

options: junior or senior residents could be paid to tutor in-House or to organize collaborative study groups. Such a system is already in place in Gregory College House. During midterms and finals, the need for academic help increases, and having such staff available in-house at late hours would be of great convenience and support for residents.

Other Recommendations

One of the perceived challenges of the new College House is its physical location on the eastern part of campus. Currently, there is a trend for upperclassmen to live on the west side of the campus; this is shown by the density of the off-campus living in the area as well as the high volume of upper-classmen applications to the High Rises. Thus, incentives may be needed to promote or retain upperclassmen to live in the new College House. One of these ways would be to have diverse room types; for example, both a hall system and suite system could be implemented, thereby creating more flexibility for upperclassmen. Also, having the option to have Community Living would further bolster the attractiveness of the College House to upperclassmen.

College House Forums

DuBois College House
3900 Walnut Street
House Dean: Patricia C. Williams
Total Resident Population: 186

Academic Support Services

The in-house tutoring seems to be used mostly by residents from other houses. The amount of tutoring hours provided is sufficient, but the services need to be better advertised.

College House Cup

Not many residents were familiar with the College House Cup is, but would be interested in sports clinics. One resident said that there is less of a chance that they would attend off-campus events.

Programming and PennPM

Most residents left the “Have you attended a PennPM event” question blank because they had no idea what a PennPM event was. Most residents explained that they wouldn’t mind going to events in other houses.

Dining

Residents agreed that the best feature that dining has to offer is “dining dollars.” There was a general consensus that the food at 1920 Commons is sub-par and that they would much rather use their dining dollars at more locations. They also mentioned the constant shortages of silverware.

Facilities

This is the most important category to Du Bois Residents, who agree that renovations for the low-rise buildings must be undertaken or completed as soon as possible. While residents choose to live in DuBois for the family atmosphere and strong sense of community, a major disincentive is the persistent facilities issues.

In-House Communication

Residents agreed that e-mail is the most effective way of advertising.

Fisher-Hassenfeld College House

3700 Spruce Street

House Dean: April Herring

Total Resident Population: 484

Academic Support Services

A desire for tutors who could help with editing papers was expressed. (Students were aware that the Kelly Writers House provides this sort of assistance, but proposed that a staff member from the KWH could have “office hours” in Fisher once a week). Residents also suggested tutors for musical instruments.

College House Cup

Most residents had not heard of the College House Cup, but had several suggestions for events and sports that could garner more interest and participation, including rugby, ultimate Frisbee, and sports clinics. Also, off-campus events such as skiing were suggested, and a bowling league for those who are not as athletic.

Facilities

Facilities Focus was overwhelmingly unpopular among Fisher residents at the Forum. It is very hard to use, and many residents stated, “I felt dumb.” No one has heard of the user manual. There were also several complaints that the facility crew did not properly knock or announce before coming into the room.

The most pressing facilities issues in Fisher include broken showers and bathrooms that are not cleaned on a daily basis. There are also persistent problems with mice.

In-House Communication

Residents say that the College House list serve is an effective way to communicate with students. The poster by the mailboxes is also helpful, as it advertises what events are happening during a particular week.

Gregory College House

Van Pelt Manor: 3909 Spruce Street

Class of 1925: 3941 Irving Street

House Dean: Dr. Christopher Donovan

Total Resident Population: 263

Introduction

Gregory College House provides a unique experience for residents. The house is divided into two buildings separated by “the beach” (a nice lawn-like area): the Class of 1925 building (home to the Modern Languages Program) and the Van Pelt building (home to the Film Culture Program). Gregory is relatively small, housing about 260 undergraduates, ten graduate students, and a few highly-accessible faculty members (including House Dean, Chris Donovan). About 50% of the residents are freshman, while the majority of the upperclassmen are returning from the previous year. With weekly events such as “Bring Your Own Mug,” Sunday Brunch, and study breaks, it is no surprise that so many students choose to stay.

Academic Support

Students were happy with the level of academic support at Penn. They felt that there were plenty of avenues for getting help, especially in required courses.

Gregory offers general writing, math, and science help weekly. Students who utilized these sessions found them extremely helpful. One student claimed that Heather Love’s writing help was “easily one of the best parts of living in Gregory!”

College House Cup

In general, students were pleased with the College House Cup events. There was a lot of support for the addition of international sports, especially cricket. Broomball was also suggested numerous times. As for clinics, the opportunity for golf lessons was very popular.

Dining

The general sentiment was not very positive. Many of the upperclassmen interviewed no longer had meal plans, and if they did they had small plans. In general complaints were directed towards the quality of food; however, many switched out of meal plans because they valued the flexibility of cooking their own meals, cheap alternatives (food carts), and relatively high cost of meals. Most did not seem entirely satisfied with the quality of food or service.

Certain aspects of Penn Dining were very popular, though. Residents were happy with options such as Starbucks, Jamba Juice, and Einstein Bagels. One student remarked that he really enjoyed and looked forward to the Guest Chef nights.

Facilities

The main concerns Gregory residents had about facilities revolved around cockroaches and rodents. They claimed that despite traps being placed throughout their rooms, pests keep turning up. Almost every student interviewed knew of *Facilities Focus*; however, some did find it cumbersome to use. It was not difficult, one student said, it just took way too long to fill out considering the small complaint.

Programming and PennPM

Most students were unaware of the program and what it offered, especially upperclassmen. Not too much enthusiasm was expressed; however, there was an interesting suggestion for a YouTube PennPM event, which would involve students submitting their favorite videos and then going to a show.

Conclusion

Gregory residents are typically proud of and happy with their college house. Most agreed on the following:

- The need for more and better tasting options at dining halls
- Pest control improvements (Gregory specific)
- A refurbished basement (in both Class of '25 and Van Pelt). There are ping pong and pool tables, but there is much need for repair.

Harnwell College House

3820 Locust Walk

House Dean: Dr. Suhne Ahn

Total Resident Population: 821

Introduction

Harnwell College House is located next to 1920 Commons at 3820 Locust Walk, home to approximately 800 residents. Over 100 of these residents are freshmen. The House has single, 1- and 2-bedroom double, 3-bedroom triple, and 3- and 4-bedroom quad bedroom types. In addition, Harnwell has six Residential Programs, which include Ancient Studies, Arts House Program, East Asia Program, Franklin Community, International Program, and Latin American Program. The building also has a Rooftop Lounge with kitchen, Class of 1921 Lounge on the Mezzanine (with café, full-service package room, pool table, and large screen TV), lounges on every floor, Dungeon performance/ rehearsal space, ping-pong tables, dance gallery, computer lab, library, exercise room, meeting rooms, two music practice rooms, 2 grand pianos and 7 uprights, and ATM. Harnwell hosts many weekly events, including Sunday Milk 'n Cookies and Quizzo, Monday Night Probasco Family Dinner and Chocolate Chat, Wednesday Movie Night, and Thursday Evening Coffeehouse, as well as several annual events such as Casino Night, Harnwell's Birthday Bash, and many others.

Academic Support Services

There seems to be a division between having academic support outside of the high rises vs. having it within them. On the one hand, a resident pointed out that "it is a long walk to Houston Hall," and that "tutoring really helped freshman year," while others say they would rather have "academics stay where they are." Someone also mentioned that freshman living in the High Rises do not receive as many tutoring opportunities as freshman elsewhere on campus; while Hill offers all kinds of tutoring, the High Rises have limited options. In order to determine what types of tutoring options should be provided, House Deans would need to determine which classes the majority of their residents take. Suggestions included that each High Rise could offer different tutoring services, and that a junior or senior resident could be paid to tutor in the House. In terms of computer lab access, most people present mentioned that printers need to be available 24 hours a day, even if computers are not. Some suggestions for the plausibility of this are having a computer with printer by the cafe or by the security desk.

College House Cup

Almost everyone present was aware of the College House Cup; however, they do not attend most events. Although CHC is recognized, they did not know much about it in terms of purpose, programming, or time frame. Residents expressed a desire to see more non-athletic competitions such as ping-pong, poker, and *Counterstrike*.

Dining

Many residents do not have meal plans because they felt that the plans are overpriced, the quality of the food is not worth the price, and there are not many vegetarian options. Also, some of the Penn Dining staff are not friendly or personable; however, they felt that there are misconceptions and generalizations on the part of both students and staff. They also feel that the C3 market in the basement of 1920 Commons is overpriced, the Starbucks service and quality could be improved, and that more places should accept Dining Dollars.

Facilities

Participants agreed that once the *Facilities Focus* form is actually filled out, the program is quite efficient. However, its interface looks too complicated, confusing, and cumbersome. Also, several people pointed out that in order to get a quick response, they have had to exaggerate the problem they are having. Everyone said that the program should be more user-friendly, and that there should be a Housing division for Facilities.

In-House Communication

In terms of communication within Harnwell, residents felt that the newsletter, the Harnwell Sun, is too long to hold readers' attention. However, several residents agreed that the white board in the lobby is quite effective. A resident suggested that television screens be installed to advertise events in place of posters, similar to those in Rodin. Those in attendance said that people tend to read RA and GA e-mails more than the Harnwell Sun, and do not tend to participate in surveys.

Programming and PennPM

Some had heard of PennPM events, but no one who was present seemed to know exactly what the PennPM program is. Many present said that they had attended events without realizing that they are PennPM events, and that the name does not make a difference. Overall, participants did not feel that having the label "PennPM" is necessary, since so many events are already offered and advertised in the College Houses, such as the Lunar New Year, Underground Shakespeare, and Casino Night.

Harrison College House

3910 Irving Street

House Dean: Dr. Frank Pellicone

Total Resident Population: 852

Introduction

Harrison is the largest College House on campus with over 800 residents. Harrison boasts several unique programs, including the Freshmen Experience Residential Program, the in-house performing group Front Row Theatre, and a dinner series that invites nearly 40 faculty members each year. Even with the large size of the house, residents are generally very happy with the amount of house programming as well as the recent facilities upgrades.

Academic Support Services

One of the topics discussed was the quality of academic support that RAs/GAs provided. One resident brought up that this could be a “hit-or-miss” relationship, depending on the academic background of the RA/GA and how it matched up with the interests of the resident(s). Using the same terminology, residents described Peer Tutoring as “hit-or-miss” as well, depending on the competency of tutors. They believe that there should be other qualifications when hiring tutors that go beyond GPA requirements. They also emphasize the importance of having tutor availability during exam times. Lastly, they support a potential system for pairing up peers in study groups, but they are afraid of the consistency and quality of matching system.

College House Cup

In regards to the College House Cup, Harrison residents have a few small, but important suggestions. First, they would like to see the events shorter because they are too much of a time commitment right now. Next, some residents supported having more athletic events. Turnout might be better if there are more purely athletic events. The last idea was to improve marketing; many times residents don't even know about events.

Dining

Harrison residents have little to say about dining because most of them are not on meal plans anymore. They agree that nothing would really convince them to stay on a meal plan after freshman year because the quality and quantity of food at Commons is not good. They also add that you can just go to Commons and pay cash, so there really is no advantage of having an actual plan. The feedback about themed dinners was mostly positive. Guest chefs are preferred over other options, but residents usually see the chefs by pure coincidence, not because they went to Commons specifically for the event.

Facilities

Residents are generally satisfied with the facilities in Harrison. However, the residents surveyed do not like the new *Facilities Focus* maintenance request system. A big concern is the

confusing user interface. There are mixed opinions on the speed/quality of service among residents who had actually used the program; some reported faster turnaround, whereas other complained that it took multiple uses to actually get facility problems solved. Some residents said they usually called in instead of using the program because it was too confusing or just because they felt calling would get a faster response. Another complaint among residents was that the laundry machines sometimes broke down.

In-House Communication

Residents were asked about different methods of publicizing events. They strongly disprove of emails, and instead support “eye-catching” fliers or chalking. They also are in support of a generic email for each College House to address general questions.

Programming and PennPM

Harrison’s residents agree that there is definite interest in PennPM events. However, like some other things, they think that marketing could be better. Their other suggestion involved the prizes. Although practical prizes (like a mop or groceries) are useful, they are much less apt to go to an event knowing those are the prizes.

Miscellaneous

Residents noted that it might be difficult to get upperclassmen to live in the new College House on 34th street because it is so far east (and this is generally not well received by upperclassmen).

Conclusion

- Meal pricing should definitely be reevaluated. Cost is definitely the biggest deterrent for upperclassmen to purchase meal plans.
- Because of the “hit-or-miss” relationship described among RA/Gas and residents, one should consider expanding the number of staff hired (to improve the staff: resident ratio) as well as a program that links residents to more in-house peer advisors who better match individual residents’ academic interests.
- The *Facilities Focus* system should definitely be reconstructed or dropped; even with the explanatory pamphlets, students still felt that the system was overly complicated.

Hill College House

3333 Walnut Street

House Dean: Stephanie Weaver

Total Resident Population: 539

Introduction

Hill College House has more than 500 residents, and more than 90% of them are freshmen. It is focused on fostering community among freshmen, and with its own dining hall, this community is enhanced. Multiple lounges in suites and the Underground are also freshman friendly. The upperclassmen who live in Hill are mainly managers of activities in the House, such as computing, the information center, and the Underground. This creates responsibility among these upperclassmen, providing them with early experience in leadership and management.

Academic Support Services

Residents were aware of the Math tutor who came in on Tuesday evenings. They were in favor of more resource centers advertising their services more aggressively. However, many residents were ambivalent toward in-house academic services; most knew where they needed to go to get help.

College House Cup

Most residents thought that the length of the College House Cup (year-round) made it lose appeal, especially as the year draws on and academic and other extracurricular activities become more demanding. They suggested the introduction of a timeline for the College House Cup, such as over one week or a fortnight at most. Residents thought the intramural team system was ineffective and suggested an introduction of incentives that would persuade residents to join. All in all, residents did not express much interest in the points that Hill had accumulated.

Dining

Students noticed an improvement in their relationships with the dining hall employees. However, dining remains their biggest issue. They were concerned about the almost constant lack of silverware (especially knives). There were complaints that the food was not healthy every day, with fried food and very few (if any) alternatives. GAs lamented about dining's decision to stop providing food to suites during a suite study break, or some other similar event. With the Express dining option, residents suggested the counting of cereal and milk as one item, instead of two, as is the case now.

Facilities

Overall, students did not have a good experience with the web-based *Facilities Focus*. Some suggested a reversal to the telephone system, because the web-based system was too difficult to navigate. Residents were unanimously in favor of:

1. Revamping the bathrooms (tiling, lighting, soap dispensers, showers)
2. Painting and tiling the stairwells
3. Buying new furniture for the lounges
4. Fixing the drafty windows
5. Beautifying the Fishbowl
6. Introduction of a second sign-in gate at the entrance

In-House Communication

Students agreed that email was a poor way to communicate with them because of their tendency to delete email without reading it to keep junk to a minimum. A way to gain students' attention using email was making the subject line catchy and interesting. Students thought that the whiteboards stationed at the entrances and in the lounges were a very effective way to communicate with them. Some other suggestions the residents had was to invest in a monitor in the dining hall, with information on events and announcements concerning the College House and the revamping of the Hill website.

Programming and PennPM

Residents supported the formation of a non-alcoholic group on campus which would be in charge of hosting events, as opposed to having PennPm events. They further suggested that this group could be sorted into gaming groups, reading groups, movie-watching groups and Philadelphia-exploring groups, to name a few.

Kings Court English House

3465 Sansom Street

House Dean: Dr. M. Krimo Bokreta

Total Resident Population: 354

Introduction

Kings Court English College House is a low rise House with around 350 students, the majority of whom are freshmen. However, the upperclassmen, whether they are managers or Residential Advisers, take an active role in our residential community. Amenities include various public spaces, such as the Class of 1938 Lounge and the Blue lounge, a computer lab, seminar room, library with study space, game room, and music practice room. Kings Court English also has its own dining facility.

Academic Support Services

One of the Residential Advisory Board's main projects has been to assess what academic services students would like to see in the College Houses. Because of our large freshmen population, there is a significant demand for tutors for the large freshmen classes such as chemistry, math, biology, economics, and OPIM. Past reports indicate that past trials of such tutoring have not been well attended, so we propose a more flexible method of peer tutoring and mentoring with upper-classmen. To create an incentive for upper-classmen to partake in this program, perhaps work-study options could be considered, similar to the ITAs. The idea of having organized study groups was well received.

College House Cup

Not many residents were aware of the College House Cup, but once we explained what it was, they seemed interested. However, many students felt that the competition aspect itself did not enhance the experience because they feel it should just be for fun. Events that they would like to see include bake-offs (similar to what we had in College House Week), as well as pie-eating contests, ultimate Frisbee, and badminton. Because Kings Court English has a fairly high percentage of international students, they would like to see more international sports, such as rugby and cricket. To increase attendance, give-aways such as t-shirts and free food are good incentives.

Dining

There is, generally, a positive response to the KCEH dining experience. The lack of private kitchenettes leads many residents to purchase meal plans. However, freshman KCEH residents are required to purchase a meal plan regardless of need or preference. To motivate returning students to have a meal plan next year, students would like to see more Halal dining options and more restaurant-quality meals such as restaurant nights once a week. The different themed nights are successful and well attended, sometimes to the point of overflow. The most successful ones have been the vegan, local food, and hors d'oeuvres nights. The residents enjoyed the guest chefs when they came to Kings Court English. Many students expressed the

wish that the dining hall were open on the weekends, or at least open for Sunday brunch. Additionally, people who are in sports would like to see the dining hall's hours extended so that they do not have to eat before practice or find another place to eat afterward. Students appreciate the move toward trans-fat-free meal options, they would like more baked, as opposed to fried, foods.

Facilities

Facilities Focus is slow in responding to requests, if at all, especially for pest control. Temperature control in KCEH is problematic. Throughout the winter, it was extremely hot, and many students in Kings Court kept their windows open all winter. In English, there were issues with not enough heat. Also, the library in English House first floor was often overheated, and multiple times was at 87 degrees. Students expressed concern over the ambiguity of *Facilities Focus* in saying which part of this College House maintenance is needed. In English House, there have been complaints of hot water being scarce. Three rooms on Kings Court fourth floor have had serious issues with ceiling tiles falling or with flooding after a strong rain, which poses a serious safety threat to residents. The fire door on the outside staircase to Kings Court first floor does not close fully, which fire personnel have said needs immediate attention.

In-House Communication

Given the fact that so many groups on campus use fliers, there is a concern lack of consideration for the environment. However, students are not opposed to the occasional flier. More environmentally friendly options are technology intensive, such as email (either through the House or through list serves) and Facebook events. In KCEH, an effective way to get awareness out is to get permission from Dr. Bokreta to set up an informational table outside of the dining hall and reach residents that way. There is also a bi-weekly newsletter that contains a calendar of House events.

Programming and PennPM

A problem that we faced when discussing the PennPM program was a unanimous lack of awareness of the program itself. The fact that not many PennPM events happen in KCEH or in a close College House, residents felt out of touch with the program. However, upon hearing more about the program, people said they would like to see more movies, board game events, dodge ball, and talent shows. Although this was not a RAB event, Kings Court English held an "open mic" night with PennPM in conjunction with the Jewish Renaissance Project. About 30 people attended, including people from other Houses as well. We strongly feel that if we could get more events to take place in Kings Court English, it would enhance the weekend and leisure time atmospheres.

Conclusion

Areas of particular importance include facilities issues, especially the ceilings of the top floors and the temperature control of both buildings. Peer tutoring and mentoring is an area that we feel would be beneficial to explore because of the large freshmen population.

Riepe College House

310 South 36th Street

House Dean: Dr. Marilynne Diggs-Thompson

Total Resident Population: 486

The RAB Executive Board was unable to arrange a House Forum in Riepe.

Rodin College House

3903 Locust Walk

House Dean: Kenneth Grcich

Total Resident Population: 841

Introduction

Rodin College House has 841 residents, 6% of whom are freshmen. The amenities include the Rooftop Lounge, Underground Lounge, computer lab, and new high-tech study lounges on two of the residential floors. Residential programs include the Music Performance and Composition Program. Room types include singles, 1- and 2-bedroom doubles, 3 bedroom triples, 3- and 4-bedroom quads, all in a suite or apartment style.

Academic Support Services

Students would like to see academic services for paper-writing and introductory level courses. Even though they were aware that academic services were currently available in Rodin College House, they did not think that any residents utilized these services. Several students agreed that organized collaborative study groups would be extremely beneficial because sometimes they did not know anyone in their classes. Through meeting other residents in the program, community and unity would also improve in Rodin College House.

College House Cup

Several residents suggested more one-time events such as relay races, music Quizzo tournaments, and campus scavenger hunts. For seasonal sports, students would like to see cricket, kickball, and dodge ball. In addition, students would like to see sports clinics for golf, skiing, and rock climbing because these are sports that students can take advantage of during their time at Penn and in Philadelphia. In order to increase awareness of the CHC events, students suggested more advertising, earlier advertising, and incentives to participate such as gift cards and College House team shirts, which would create unity within each house. Even though these students were interested in improving the College House Cup experience, they were not concerned with the total outcome of points or overall winner of the College House Cup.

Dining

Several students agreed that flexibility was the key motivation to getting a meal plan next year. Flexibility included times of operation and locations around campus. For example, students wished that Moravian Café on 34th Street and Walnut Street accepted Penn Dining Dollars. However, the convenience of having a meal plan has continued to encourage students to purchase a meal plan. In order to make the dining experience more exciting, one student suggested having Penn student performing groups, such as a cappella groups and jazz ensembles, perform during peak operation hours. In addition, several students agreed that dining halls should improve their variety of food options. The entire group of students agreed that student-staff interaction could be greatly improved. For example, one student observed that KCEH Dining Hall staff was much nicer than the staff at the other dining halls. Additionally, several students

noted that the service at C3 was exceptionally slow because often times the staff was preoccupied with personal conversations instead of working at their station.

Facilities

Students agreed that *Facilities Focus* was difficult to use. They tried using it and eventually gave up. One student noted that it was easier to go directly to Barry Lasley's office hours, rather than trying to figure out the online process. Another student said, "I don't want to have to use a manual to use a website." The most pressing Facilities issues in Rodin College House are bathroom maintenance (such as collapsing bathroom ceilings and mold growing in bathrooms), pest control, and water temperature problems. Students would like to see improved carpet quality and maintenance of stairwells.

In-House Communication

All students agreed that e-mail is the most effective way of advertising for events. They appreciated the Rodin House Rep flyers, but did not find it necessary to contact the representatives about their Housing issues.

Programming and PennPM

The entire group of students was not familiar with the PennPM program. However, they were interested in seeing campus-wide events such as laser tag, watching movies, and board game tournaments.

Sansom Place West

3650 Chestnut Street

House Director: Michelle Ray

Total Resident Population: 553

The RAB Executive Board was unable to arrange a House Forum in Sansom Place.

Stouffer College House

Stouffer Hall: 3702 Spruce Street

Mayer Hall: 3817 Spruce Street

House Dean: Dr. Stephanie Weaver

Total Resident Population: 306

Introduction

Stouffer College House is comprised of two buildings – Mayer Hall and Stouffer Hall. Mayer Hall is an apartment style building with all four class years represented fairly equally. Stouffer Hall is predominantly singles with a mix of all four class years as well, but generally has more freshmen and sophomores. There are approximately three hundred residents and the staff is comprised of a Faculty Master, House Dean, Faculty Fellow, a Senior Fellow, ten Graduate Associates (GAs), and student managers. Stouffer is governed by a Steering committee comprised of residents from all the floors and sections from both Stouffer and Mayer Halls. The vast majority of programming in Stouffer is House-wide. Weekly events like Cookies and Coffee with the Faculty Master, intramural sporting events, and Fellows Night are extremely popular, and events such as Stouffer Outdoors (a pre-move-in camping trip), Stouffer Semi-formal and barbeques are also highly rated.

Academic Support Services

Stouffer residents tend to be happy with the academic resources offered in the House. Stouffer has a math tutor in-House every week for several hours as well as many one-time workshops, such as resume building and interview skills. The residents also felt more comfortable working with peer-tutors in-House than they felt with their own TAs. Stouffer would like to see more subjects represented – writing and language tutors, for example.

College House Cup

Stouffer has enjoyed several years of success in the College House Cup – both in the Intramural competition sponsored by the Department of Recreation and the “one-shot” events hosted by RAB. Stouffer residents did suggest that they would like to see more eating competitions and the addition of more intramural leagues – Ultimate Frisbee being a very popular suggestion.

Dining

Stouffer encourages its residents to eat together as a community in the basement level of 1920 Commons. A number of upper-class students have purchased another meal plan because they enjoy the community that residential dining affords. They also found convenience in having a meal plan, even the Mayer residents that have a private kitchen. However, many noted that the food quality and service seems to be a lot worse this year.

Dining has experimented with new ideas – for example, the self-serve sandwich station was a popular change. However, the self-serve pasta station was only given two days to try. In

general, even though residents may not be happy with the food quality in 1920 Commons, they do acknowledge that Dining is making an effort to reach out to students for feedback and are appreciative of that.

Facilities

Stouffer had three main facility complaints. Firstly, the shared spaces are not kept clean. One resident reported that she submitted a request on *Facilities Focus* to clean up a large spill in the stairwell. That request was never followed up on. In general, *Facilities Focus* is a difficult and unintuitive system – the upper-class residents preferred the system in the past. However, when residents were able to submit a request about their own room, the request was handled promptly and successfully. In all the rooms, all the residents agreed that the lighting was poor and some effort should be made to remedy that. Stouffer residents liked the idea of in-House Facilities Office Hours, but most did not know they existed until RAB reps mentioned it during the House Forum.

Programming and PennPM

Stouffer residents generally do not attend PennPM events outside of Stouffer unless points are at stake for the College House Cup. Even then, many residents do not know that the event is sponsored by the PennPM program. This lack of interest stems from the vast number of events that Stouffer itself offers already. Because of this, many residents are already “evented-out” as it is and tend to not look for any more events to go to. Attendance at other house events is largely dependent on weather and proximity to Stouffer.

In-House Communication

Stouffer residents respond largely to e-mail and Facebook advertising. Most other forms of communication go largely unnoticed – especially fliers hanging on all the floors. However, signage on the entrance to buildings tends to grab their attention.

Conclusion

In general, Stouffer residents are really happy with their experiences. Most residents do not have any large-scale complaints and most of the suggestions deal with dining or facilities. The community aspect of Stouffer appeals the most to the residents which leads to Stouffer having the highest retention rate of all the College Houses – a fact that many Stouffer residents are well aware of and proud of.

Ware College House

3650 Spruce Street

House Dean: Dr. Nathan Smith

Total Resident Population: 597

Introduction

Ware College House is the center house in the Quadrangle. The house has 597 residents and is composed of approximately 75% (444) first-year students. Ware is composed of almost all doubles and singles, in traditional dormitory style with shared hall bathrooms. There are 10 different buildings that make up Ware. The building also has McClelland Hall, where there is a study lounge, fitness room, computer lab, music practice room, and McClelland Express. The house also has 7 additional lounges throughout the different buildings, 2 laundry rooms, a library, and The Tower, a game/study area complete with a pool table, ping-pong, and a large flat screen TV.

Ware hosts many events, including trips to the Academy of Music, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia Zoo, as well as concerts, sporting events, and other educational/cultural events in Philadelphia. Ware hosts an annual semi-formal and weekly Sunday brunch in McClelland. Due to a generous gift from the Ware family, the house also invites guest speakers to come in and speak and have dinner with residents.

Academic Support Services

Several residents like the thought of bringing tutors to the college houses. The courses they believed to need the most support are economics, math, psychology and the writing seminars. The group did not like the idea of having the house administration organize collaborative study groups amongst the residents because “it might be awkward or uncomfortable.” Half of the group thought TA’s would make better tutors because they are more experienced and knowledgeable while the other half said undergraduates would be better because they would relate to students better.

College House Cup

All of the residents agreed that not enough people participate in the College House Cup for them to be excited about it. One resident suggested hosting a formal where attendance would earn your house points. Several residents responded positively to the suggestion that “Ultimate Frisbee” should be offered as an intramural sport. When asked about offering sport clinics or off campus events, all of the Ware residents agreed that it would be enjoyable to do things such as skiing but it ultimately depends on the price. One resident stated that having inter-hall events or competitions could be fun. Perhaps this could be integrated into the College House Cup competition system.

Dining

Most residents conveyed that they will not be buying meal plans next year because it is very costly. “It is so much more expensive than just eating at the food trucks or [local] restaurants.” They all agreed that they would like more options as to where they can use their meals. One resident pointed out that the service at the eatery Savory is very slow. The Ware House Dean pointed out that if the dining dollars machine were cheaper, more places would use it and would be able to accept dining dollars as payment. Several residents noted that the McClelland Express should extend its hours – it currently closes early on Fridays and is not open on Saturdays.

Facilities

Most of the residents at the forum have never used *Facilities Focus*. After some explanation, several recognized it but didn’t know what it was called. Some of the most pressing issues in Ware include the elevator not working for periods of time, the elevator noise as it stops on each floor, and one resident had a specific complaint about a particular sink in a bathroom. One resident suggest having SEPTA token machines in McClelland and another suggested having the quarter machines actually in the laundry room. Several students had complaints about the in-house gym facilities, including frequent break-downs of the exercise equipment that are not fixed for long periods of time.

Regarding bathrooms in the College House, a female resident remarked, “Either don’t lock the bathrooms or get different keys because boys can still get into the girls’ bathrooms.” Several reported the showers to be freezing and that the water heaters don’t always work. Several residents wanted the bathrooms cleaned more often.

Regarding Internet access, a resident pointed out that not all of the Internet outlets worked.

Programming and PennPM

Only a small percentage of the residents there had attended a PennPM event. A few students said they would attend movie nights if we held them outside in the Quad. Most residents stated that they felt ill informed about PennPM locations and events.

Conclusion

Residents reported a general need for improvement in facilities and dining. Residents want an easier way to report facilities needs so that problems can be reported and fixed in a more timely fashion. Making sure that the water heaters worked was a concern for several residents who have found that the showers are often freezing. Also, a need for more regular housekeeping was brought up. Paying attention to things like these would help increase the comfort of living for those in Ware. In improvement in Dining Services (i.e. cheaper prices, better service, and more options) might encourage more students to purchase meal plans beyond their first year and create a more content student body.

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