



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

RESIDENCE LIFE | DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

FOUNDATION & STRUCTURE

Mission Statement

We develop living environments to enhance the academic mission of UWL through creating inclusive communities, supporting experiential learning and building meaningful relationships. We are student-centered, we care and we have fun!

Guiding Principles

- We enthusiastically believe living on campus enhances each student's college experience.
- Undergraduate students are our central focus and student input guides our decision making.
- Inclusivity is intertwined throughout our work and we continue to educate, while improving our cultural humility.
- Ensuring safe, clean, and visually appealing residence halls with timely response to repairs and facility improvements is a foundational component in meeting our students' needs.
- We demonstrate responsible fiscal management and good stewardship of student monies.
- Our ability to support and develop student leaders is enhanced by our collaborative partnerships with professionals from across campus.
- We strive for radical hospitality. We work hard to provide outstanding service to our students during the academic year and our conference guests in the summer.
- Our processes and systems of service are organized, efficient, and effective.
- Our staff, in all positions, add value to our department. They are respected, their identities are embraced, and they are empowered to be creative, and therefore flourish, in their positions.

Staffing Transitions

There were several staffing transitions over the 2020-2021 academic year, both student and full-time staff. When reflecting on the team and their work this semester, the word that comes to mind is “gratitude.” Gratitude for each staff member (who remained and who moved on) who gave of themselves in service to the residence life community. The staff demonstrated commitment, dedication, resilience, and creativity. There were many challenges, but the team rose above them with grace and selflessness.

Staffing Changes

- Jenni Brundage, Director of Residence Life
- Carol Vang, Hutchison Hall Director- took on a second community (Angell Hall) September-December
- Doralynn Mellinger, Sanford Hall Director- took on a second community (Laux Hall) January-May
- Josh Zabel, Drake Hall Director
- Andie Coxey, Angell Hall Director (January)
- Irene Chin, Hutchison Assistant Hall Director
- Joe Mcgathy, Custodian
- Todd Pyka, Custodian (November)
- Tony Hansen, Assistant Director for Operations
- Victoria Carlson, Occupancy Coordinator (April)
- Michelle Edge, Interim Coordinator for Operations and Conference Services (June)

Retirements

- Carol Beckerjeck, University Services Associate (15 years of services)
- Kenny Miller, Custodian (15+ years of service)

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Much of the departmental focus during AY20-21 was responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

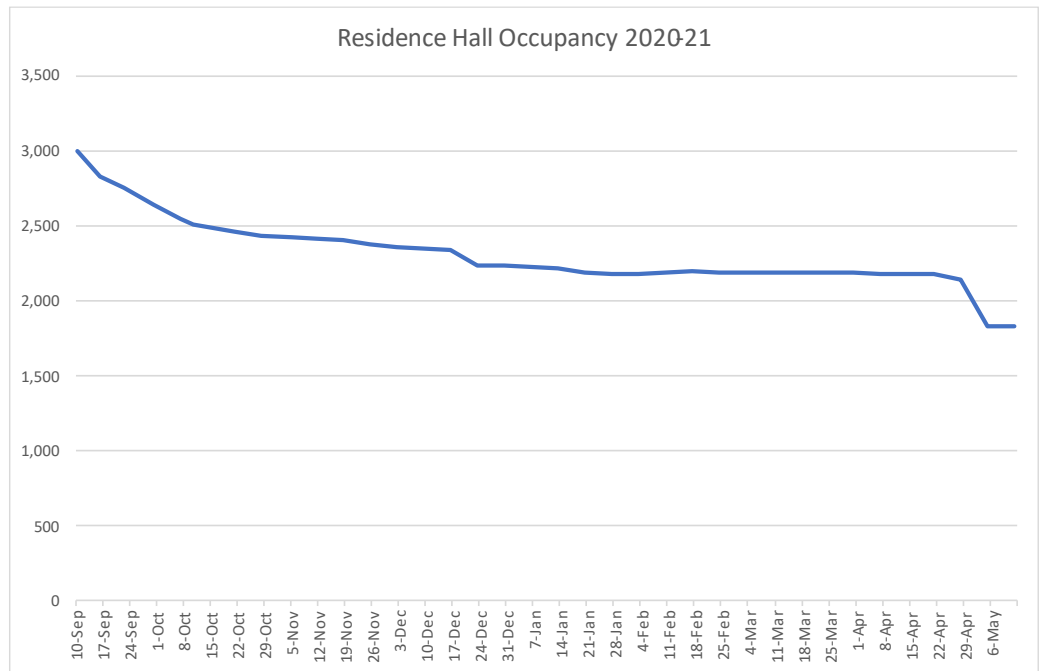
The Residence Life staff worked tirelessly, with campus leadership and local health authorities to create a safe, positive, and engaging living environment for the residential students. Mitigating the risk of COVID-19 within the community, so that the students could have a successful semester, was the highest priority.

To ensure the safety of the residential students, the following summative actions were taken:

Operations/Occupancy

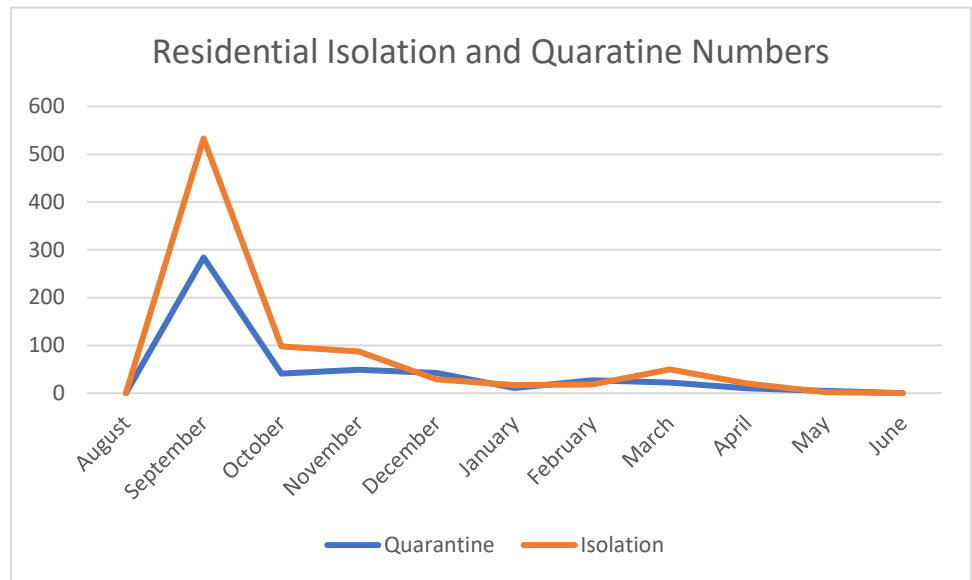
- Spent approximately \$50K on Covid-19 preparedness, including “personal protective equipment”, cleaning supplies, facilities augmentation supplies, staffing needs, hotel contract (isolation/quarantine overflow housing), etc.
- Penned and implemented housing contract addendum and an updated contract cancellation policy.
- Centralized all mail services
- De-Densified residential living spaces when possible:

- July 29, 2020 occupancy was scheduled to be 99.85%
- September 8, 2020 occupancy was 90.12% (accounted for reducing occupancy by one full residence hall and honoring cancellation requests)
- September 13, 2021 UWL issued a *shelter in place* mandate (after this, cancellations continued to increase)
- Occupancy at the close of Fall 2020 was 67.14%
- Occupancy held at approximately 65% for the entire Spring semester.



- Created and implemented a comprehensive isolation and quarantine plan including:
 - Emptying a 200+ bed building and reassigning or releasing current occupants
 - Negotiated an external housing contract at a local hotel
 - Created a 24-hour internal I/Q triage and response team
 - Coordinated dining needs
 - Implemented and enforced a regular residential testing program
 - Collaborated with the Covid Investigation Team to determine status and needs:

- 1424 students were required to isolate or quarantine due to covid-exposure (this is NOT including the 366 Coate Hall residents required to *shelter in place* prior to the campus joining the mandate)
- Approx. 40% of students opted to Quarantine on campus rather than going home
- Approx. 50% of students opted to Isolate on campus rather than going home



Residential Engagement

- In conjunction with the operations team, shifted all START presentations, tours, and incoming student communication to virtual platforms.
- Created an expanded move-in process that allowed for de-densification of crowds. Students were able to safely move-in to campus with support of their families while physical distancing and following CDC guidelines.
- Penned and enforced Covid-19 housing policies regarding masks, guests, and distancing
- Created *crisis room* for in-hall face to face intervention needs
- Augmented live-in staff job descriptions to ensure staff safety while still robustly offering student support and connection
- Creatively engaged the community with virtual programming and individual interactions
- Engaged in 546 conduct hearings due to covid-19 policy violations to reinforce community safety
- Facilitated and tracked residential testing requirement

Facilities Management

- Debulked lounges and common areas
- Locked game rooms, computer labs, and music rooms; reduced occupancy/seating in the rooms that remained available for use
- Hired 2nd shift custodial staff for additional disinfection and sanitizing
- Added self-cleaning supplies in bathrooms, common areas, and made available at the front desk
- Augmented department van for safe transport of students to isolation housing

OPERATIONS

Occupancy Management

Accomplishments

- Residence Life made robust improvements to the living learning community housing application and roommate selection process to create a greater sense of belonging to the community from the start. Also, in partnership with the College of Science and Health, the “Women in STEM” community began accepting applications. The community will house 17 students this Fall 2021.

- With increased complications with changing occupancy, the staff expanded collaboration with Campus Card Office in processing student cancellations and billing adjustments to better balance student and departmental accounts.
- Residence Life partnered with Admissions in their “re-entry” campaign to re-enroll/admit students who had taken time away from UWL due to the pandemic. All students in need of housing in Spring 2021 were granted housing.

Issues

- Covid-19 presented many opportunities for review and interpretation of the current housing contract. In consultation with Office of General Council many individual circumstances resulted in updated policy changes and more specified expectations.
- Due to increased vacancy, Residence Life had to determine the level of flexibility allowable to students presenting with concerns due to Covid-19 and mental health concerns. Ultimately, being supported by HEERF I and II funds, Residence Life was able to maintain a balanced budget and re-engage in renovation and maintenance schedules as planned.
- The number of returning students who were eligible to live on campus was significantly impacted due to lower total occupancy. The Residence Life team opted to open eligibility to a greater number of continuing students than in years past.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Residence Life will complete a full renovation of Orris White Hall, including updating electrical, fire/life safety systems, bathroom remodeling (including all-gender options) and residence hall furnishings. Also, the second phase of renovations of Laux Hall which will update all furnishings will be completed. Floor lounges in both buildings will be converted back to dedicated common space for the residents of the community and therefore will no longer serve as overflow housing.
- Returning to a fall returning housing application process will help our occupancy numbers rebound for Fall 2022.
- The StarRez (housing data management system) Auto-Allocate tool will be used to assign incoming students their building and room number. The system uses the student demographic information (based on departmental determined parameters) and the roommate groups to assign students to their spaces. The largest challenge will be in Eagle Hall due to the rooms being filled as triples. Some roommate pairs will be divided between two bedrooms within a shared suite. With the current configuration, there is little to deter this from being an outcome, however, in future years, Residence Life will be more overt in communications about this possibility, particularly with incoming students.

Budget

Accomplishments

- All spending was frozen with the exception of Covid-19 related needs. Approximately \$50K was spend to mitigate Covid-19 concerns.
- Received \$1.38M in HEERF I funding to recoup losses from FY20; Received an additional \$1.7M to recoup losses from FY21. Budget was successfully balanced by the completion of FY21.
- Spend down plan for net revenue effectively projected continued momentum of capitol planning and renovation schedules as previously outlined.
- Transitioned from WISDM budget platform to WISER for budget tracking and management.
- Due to low interest rates, our bonds were refinanced and reduced our debt service.
- A rate increase of 2.5% has been approved by the Board of Regents for 2021-2022 to continue to fund proposed renovations of our 8 traditional halls.

- Legislature and State Building Commission approved the capitol plan for adding elevators over the next 5-7 years; the number of buildings will be determined as funding is identified and slated.

Issues

- Decreased occupancy resulted in a loss of \$3.7M in room revenue.
- COVID-19 impact on loss of revenue from pizza sales, laundry commissions, vending commissions, WIAA State Track Meet, conferences, and summer residents will be approximately \$297K.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Examine operational practices and policies to determine any existing barriers for students and create updated practices and policies that effectively remove the barriers for student success.
- Determined additional renovation options for Laux and Orris White Phases II and what funding options will support. Reconfiguration of basement level floors may result in more robust engagement and learning spaces for students.
- Carefully re-engage in spending of forecasted budget. Maintain efficiencies learned through Covid-19 and determine more fiscally responsible uses of funds.

Conferences

Accomplishments

- Residence Life was able to support a small conference program summer 2021, including hosting volunteers and officials for the WIAA State Track Meet.

Issues

- Due to COVID-19 all conference activity for summer 2020 was cancelled. This included the WIAA State Track Meet.
- No hiring took place for summer 2020.
- The late decision to host a small number of conferences during summer 2021 and turnover within the Residence Life staff caused challenges to sustain services and staffing. Anticipating a return to normal services in 2022, the staffing will be addressed.

Initiatives for 2021-22

- Residence Life serves on a university-wide committee to begin centralizing conference services. This committee is led by Extended Education and involves University Centers and Campus Recreation.
- Determine best practices for the role of the Live-in Residence Life staff. Create a more sustainable staffing model to support the fast-pace of the (short) conference season.

CUSTODIAL AND FACILITIES

Custodial

Accomplishments

- Successfully hired 2 full time custodians during Covid-19.
- Staffed afterhours/weekends and 2nd shift during Fall 2020 for Covid-19 related cleaning needs.
- Fully equipped custodial staff with Covid-19 mitigation materials and equipment to protect them and effectively clean residence hall spaces (cleaning suits, fogger machines, etc.).
- Created a Covid-19 mitigation team for the Isolation/Quarantine building and drafted protocol for maintaining safety.

Issues

- The determination was made late to hire a full Assistant Housekeeper team; application numbers were low resulting in being gravely understaffed. Summer staff recruitment was green-lit according to typical recruitment cycles, but yielded the same outcome.
- The mental and emotional toll of being essential staff and being the ones to clean, sanitize, and disinfect the residence halls impacted the custodial team.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Develop diversity and inclusion training
- Maintain cleanliness and quality of our residence halls
- Adapt practices as need to respond to Covid-19 on campus

Facilities

Accomplishments

- Jonathan Henry continues to serve as Interim Coordinator of Facilities managing facilities and custodians within Residence Life.
- The ventilation system in Drake Hall was improved by the replacement of air handlers in January 2021. The same project is slated for Coate Hall for summer 2021, however inventory of the supplies has delayed this project.
- The renovation of the O. White Hall Director apartment was completed despite the building renovation being paused. The renovation included a complete remodel of the kitchen and bathroom, expansion into room 122 (making this a 2 bedroom apartment), adding laundry facilities, and new flooring.
- The decision was made to replace smoke detector batteries annually (summer). This will decrease the disturbances during the academic year to students and routinize our safety plan.
- It is required that fire/life safety checks (smoke detectors, strobes, etc.) are performed annual in every room within every hall. In the past, this service has been performed by an external vendor. This year, it was determined to use ORL and FMP staff over the winter closure. This saved us \$20K in service expenses. This will continue in future years.

Issues

- Maintenance costs/chargebacks continue to increase. Tracking statuses of work orders and how they correlate with chargebacks continues to be challenging. Residence Life staff are working with IT to create dashboards and automatic reports for cross-verification.
- Hiring Assistant Housekeepers and summer student staff was challenging this year.
- The physical labor of moving furniture in and out of storage this year was cumbersome and resulted in an increased number of workers' comp injuries.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Orris White Hall will be renovated in two phases within the same year. Phase I will be an All Agency Project that is capped at a \$3M spend threshold. The project consists of a new fire alarm system, fire suppression sprinkler system, upgraded electrical system, renovated bathrooms, an addition of 4 ADA compliant, single use bathrooms, and new data wiring. Phase II (carpet, painting, and new furniture) of the renovation will be completed shortly after the completion of Phase I. The building will reopen with full occupancy Fall 2022.
- Laux Hall renovations will be completed Summer 2022. Phase II (carpet, painting, and new furniture) of the renovation will be completed and the building reopen with full occupancy Fall 2022.

- Residence Life secured full funding from the Campus Greenfund to replace all steam traps in Coate Hall during summer 2021. Typically this project would require matching funds by the department, however due to the need to spend down by the Greenfund and the budget uncertainty of ORL, at the time, the managers of the Greenfund made a generous exception to cover all costs for this project. This will dramatically improve the noise pollution of the heat system in the halls which will improve the student experience, also, it will increase efficiency of the heating system.

RESIDENTIAL ENGAGEMENT

Student Staff (RA, DC, Senior Staff)

Due to impacts of Covid-19, several things about the student staff positions changed. First, much of the face to face responsibilities were reduced to be cautious of increased exposure to many people. Next, with the creation of the centralized mail center, the Desk Coordinator position dramatically changed. Finally, the staff was asked to work at the desk as part of their 20 hours of weekly work.

Issues

- Staff moral was low this year. The year began with the beginnings of a work-strike. Although the strike was not followed through with, the impact of the concerns caused many challenges and divisions within the staff.
- Unknown occupancy caused challenges about how to staff when there were openings.
- Recruitment was tough and application numbers were low. Hiring has continued through summer.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Eliminated the Desk Coordinator role and created a Senior RA position that does not have a floor to manage.
- Assess desk hours as part of the staff responsibilities.
- Expand recruitment and selection process.

Hall Director Staff (AHD, HD)

There was high turnover on the Live-in staff team due to a variety of reasons including the impacts of Covid-19. This caused the staff to creatively stretch and cover responsibilities in other buildings and in the main office, as requested. Much of the face to face responsibilities were reduced to be cautious of increased exposure to many people.

Issues

- Several HDs directly maintained supervision over two buildings and staffs. There isn't back up staffing when there are departures.
- Professional development sessions were paused; the staff felt the absence and is calling for it to be resumed in 2021-2022.
- Recruiting a diverse candidate pool remains a challenge. And, retaining staff, particularly staff of color has been challenging.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Re-organization of the department will assist in retention and professional development opportunities.
- Shift in how we think about professional development travel opportunities to offer high ticket conferences to first year hall directors.
- Expand recruitment and marketing process to yield a more diverse candidate pool.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community is at the core of how we create engaged communities for students that foster development and success. Covid-19 challenged the way communities were formed, but Residence Life staff remained committed to developing intentional and individualized experiences for students.

Accomplishments

- Live-in hall staff were nimble and creative in their approach to engagement and community development. Thinking outside the box, they hosted hundreds of programs that included outdoor scavenger hunts, virtual craft nights, trivia competitions, and many hours of hanging out in zoom-rooms.
- Centering the impact of Covid-19 creating increased senses of isolation for students (in addition to non-covid related wellness impacts), the in hall staff intentionally connected with residents individually to provide resources and support. While this is a typical practice, it was tracked and managed at multiple levels of the staff and reported to the appropriate campus partners, as needed.
- Residence Life staff continued to partner with the Career Center to bolster the use and effective service of the Eagle Advantage initiative. This will continue in 2021-2022.
- Residence Life staff worked with New Student and Family Programs to create the foundation for a “sophomore year experience”. This will continue in 2021-2022.
- Core-Team continued to provide students and opportunity to be in community with each other, even in virtual settings.

Challenges

- The nature of the work done in Residence Life is face to face. Being virtual and having closed doors created challenges to connecting people to each other.
- Additionally, staffing transitions caused some challenges in implementing some of the collective ideas of the community development committee; many of the live-in professional staff created their own expectations for their staff teams.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Reimagine the purpose of the community development model to include four pillars from our mission statement: Enhance the academic mission of UWL; Create inclusive communities, Support experiential learning; Build meaningful relationships.
- Consider ways to enhance High Impact Practices (HIPs) to include campus partners.
- Assess and create avenues to enhance living learning and faculty engagement experiences within the residence halls.
- Partner with Academic Affairs to track and support students who are identified in the Navigate system by faculty.

Director's Council

To create a more accessible venue for direct student feedback about their housing experience, the department sunsetted the former Student Embassy group to transition to a “Director’s Council.” This was launched in December 2020 and regularly attended by 7 students who offered feedback and suggestions on housing issues to the Director of Residence Life.

Challenges

- Covid-19 caused a delay in convening the group in the fall.

- While the virtual format may be a way to connect in the future, it did not allow for the group to connect and gain momentum as quickly. By the time there was regular attendance and movement, the year was over.

Student Conduct

Accomplishments

- Created and enforced Covid-19 policies regarding masks and guests; 43% of the cases heard in conduct were for Covid-19 policy violations including 14 housing contract cancellations.
- Transitioned to virtual conduct meetings resulting in equivalent effectiveness of intentional developmental impact.
- Worked with University Police to shift policies as needed to manage escalated concerns/situations within the residence halls and to ensure policies and protocols are equitably implemented.
- Opened communication between Residence Life and Athletics when there is a student athlete in the conduct system.

Challenges

- Working on shift in culture in policy development. We are moving toward changing policies to be just versus fair.

Initiatives

- The Alcohol Task Force has made recommendations and Residence Life will need to be a part of implementation.
- Continued work on managing policy enforcement with SLO and UP partners.
- Residence Life will manage all cases from the initial report through sanctioning. SLO will be consulted if there are implications regarding student status, as well as other offices as necessary should there be additional factors such as Title IX.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Equity Plan

As the department and university were navigating the constantly changing and uncertain demands of Covid-19, it was the decision of our leadership team that four goals would be the focus of the year which were extensions or versions of previous year goals. Further, as the department welcomed many staffing transitions, including the entrance of a new Director, it was imperative a full picture of the departmental climate was shared and addressed. This was done with intentional involvement and assignment by the Director to all full-time staff within the department. Once the goals were established in concert with climate and Covid-19 needs, all leadership team members and in hall staff were asked to choose at least one goal and be a part of the working group. Each working group was chaired by one leadership team member.

- **Goal 1:** Invest in our marginalized students.
- **Goal 2:** Policies: Align our emergency routing protocols (often calls made by residents and Student/Professional)
- **Goal 3:** Policies: Account for and remedy discrepancies regarding equity in our current Residence Life Policies and Procedures (Conduct).
- **Goal 4:** Professional Development: Actively engage in ongoing professional and personal development in identity-based / social justice realm.

Initiatives for 2021-2022

- Creation of a departmental assessment plan that centers social justice and equity .
- Ongoing collaboration and assessment of our gender inclusive housing spaces.
- Continued dialogue about restorative justice with our campus leadership.

MVP (*Multi-Cultural Validation Program*)

Accomplishments

- There remained a high level of interest in and success for this program. This year, we had 16 applications for students to become and mentor and 19 for mentees. There were some students who moved off campus due to Covid-19 concerns that still remained connected to the program due to the community they built.

Challenges

- Turnover in staffing in OMSS and Residence Life. Much of the support was provided from within the hall and student mentors/RAs stepped into leadership roles to supplement when full-time professional staff were unavailable.
- The money we have for the program will remain static moving forward. As room rates increase, this will mean fewer students that are able to take part in the program.

Initiatives

- Develop a more thorough assessment of the program so we can ensure that we make changes based on data.
- Examine how this community fits in with our living learning communities, and explore the possibility of expanding its reach and impact.

SEEDs (*Students Education and Embracing Diversity*)

Accomplishments

- Piloted the SEED RA position.
- Maintained support for students within each residential community and facilitated challenging dialogue, support, and programming in the face of the global pandemics.

Challenges

- The support for the students in the SEED RA roles was not effective. Often the students felt overwhelmed and overburdened. It is important to more clearly define expectations and resources for the students in these dual roles to help them manage the personal and professional load of working as a SEED RA. Additionally, it is important for the Live-In professional staff to have more intentional connections with their SEED RAs.
- This was an unfortunate year to pilot a new position. The experiences this year are muddied by the impacts of Covid-19. It will be important to better assess (intentionally) the success of this position during the 2021-2022 year.

Initiatives

- Provide needed support for SEEDs as they become full student staff members in each hall.
- Explore an integrated curricular model where we ask SEEDs to facilitate established activities.
- Work with live-in staff and leadership team to provide the support they need for SEED RAs to thrive.
- Assess the success of this position.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment was very informal this year. Small surveys were sent to residential students to gain their feedback about changes and needs within the hall. Specifically, at the end of the academic year a survey asked about the following things in order to make data driven decisions for coming years:

- Cable TV usage/Streaming Services
- Communication
- Piano Usage
- Computer Lab Usage
- Work Order Usage
- Future Renovation considerations
- Bathroom cleaning schedules
- Mail Center
- Overall Feedback

The survey was sent during finals week and yielded a 15% response rate.

Challenges

- Residence Life moved away from Skyfactor due to cost. Also, while the tool allows for cross-institutional data, it does not allow for as much customization and specific services feedback.
- Most additionally surveyed feedback was about Covid-19 which skews a traditional year's experience.

Initiatives

- Create an internal assessment tool to be launched annually that will mirror Skyfactor results.
- Assess the data from Skyfactor 2019 and create goals based on that feedback.