

University Housing

The Value of the Residential *Experience*





Executive *Summary*

The residential experience is a critical component of an Illinois education and provides a transformative space for students to learn and grow. Students who live with University Housing are connected to campus, surrounded by easily accessible resources and fully supported as they develop friendships and long-lasting personal and professional connections at Illinois. That is why students who live and eat with University Housing are significantly more likely to graduate than their live-off peers.

A commitment to the academic mission of the University of Illinois is a hallmark of our department. The residential curriculum serves to prepare students by teaching critical life skills. Our 10 living-learning communities, each with a campus academic partner, further the academic experience for student residents by offering coursework inside their residence halls.

Residence halls, apartments and dining halls are much more than places to sleep and dine: The friendships and connections made here last a lifetime. Students are immersed in the campus culture, which provides opportunities for truly transformational experiences that increase student persistence. Additionally, University Housing provides a safe, inclusive and amenity-rich environment at a variety of rates that fit student budgets.

Background

At the turn of the 20th century, housing options for University of Illinois students were limited: find a rooming house in the community or live in a co-op. The residents of co-op houses found time between their studies to share the chores of cooking, cleaning and maintenance.

The first residence hall on campus, Busey Hall, was constructed in 1916. The building was built to house women – marking the first time women had a living space on campus. At the Busey Hall groundbreaking ceremony, University of Illinois President Edmund James stipulated the new building should not be called a “dormitory,” as the residence halls would offer so much more than mere accommodations for students.

The University of Illinois recognizes the residential experience is key to an undergraduate education. With few exceptions, all first-year students are required to live in a facility certified by the university as meeting standards for facilities, staffing and dining.

University Housing now offers 26 residence halls, three apartment complexes, four dining halls, six dining retail locations and 10 LLCs. These facilities allow University Housing to serve undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, staff, conference guests and community members year-round.

Our caring, supportive staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Their energy and commitment to building strong communities of students help our residents feel connected and that they matter.



Student Success & *Belonging*

**86% of residents said they feel
like they belong at Illinois.**

The residential campus model offers a transitional period to independence, while encouraging students to stretch their boundaries in a safe space. Investment in key student skills that promote well-being, community engagement, identity and cultural exploration, social responsibility and lifelong learning mark a substantial difference between on-campus living and off. University Housing's service model allows students to flourish with live-in staff members, embedded mental health counselors and case managers, as well as 24-7 emergency response and maintenance.

Social bonds formed in University Housing help lay the groundwork for student success, belonging and persistence. In 2023, approximately 78% of undergraduate hall residents made a friend in their building, and more than 86% reported feeling like they belong at the university. Our dining and residence halls provide numerous social settings, and "communal eating has been shown to impact on wellbeing and facilitate the development of

social bonding (Dunbar, 2017), which contributes to a sense of belonging (Ahn & Davis, 2020)" (in Mulrooney & Kelly, 2021). University Housing facilitates resident connections with campus resources and other students; in a 2019 Indiana University study, sophomores living on campus were nearly twice as likely to participate in activities and support programs as those who lived off campus (Gonyea et al. 2019).

Research demonstrates that living on campus is associated with stronger academic performance (López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Nicpon et al., 2006; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1999). Pascarella and Terenzini report there is "remarkably consistent evidence that students living on campus are more likely to persist and graduate than students who commute" (2005, p. 420-421). First-year students who gain a sense of belonging have a higher grade point average and rate of persistence and degree attainment (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009).





According to an analysis of campus data sets, students who live in University Housing for their first year are 122% more likely to graduate than those who do not. Those who live with University Housing for a second year perform even better – improving that likelihood to 151%. University Housing’s self-operated dining service

88% of residents feel they made the right decision to attend Illinois.

model provides additional impact to students. Dining staff care deeply about providing students with an experience that might remind them of home – no matter where home might be. Each of University Housing’s four dining halls serve meal options that reflect a variety of cultural, regional and ethnic influences. Staff also hosted 45 events in FY2024 that celebrated unique cultural events and traditions and featured unique meal options. Authentic recipes from varied ethnic and regional backgrounds served in dining halls help foster a sense of cultural food security, safety and belonging (Wright, et al., 2021).

University Housing’s dining program also provides meals for students with dietary restrictions, such as severe food allergies, as well as preferences and religious accommodations like vegan, gluten free, halal, kosher and more, allowing students from all backgrounds to eat together. Additionally, University Housing provides hot meals for food insecure students at stations outside of dining facilities and donates meals to campus partners working with students in need.

Campus dining options make a difference in the ability of students to connect with each other and can raise student GPAs. Social connections formed in University Housing’s communal dining spaces help students succeed and persist on college campuses (Mulrooney & Kelly, 2021). Existing literature has consistently found the positive association between dining experiences and student achievements, such as grade point average or retention (e.g. Hagedorn et al., 2019 or Bowman et al., 2019). In addition, recent research shows such a strong relationship between student social bond formation and communal dining on college campuses that meal swipes can be used to predict social connectedness and retention (Jarrat et al., 2019).



The *Residential* Curriculum Model

A core focus of University Housing's efforts is to provide an academic experience within living communities on campus. This academic focus reinforces and supports what students learn in their classes – within University Housing, students learn critical life skills and broaden their perspectives.

University Housing's residential curriculum model serves all residents. The central message of the Student Learning Imperative (1994, ACPA) is that residential educators must view student learning as their mission, and student learning should not be viewed as the sole responsibility of an academic division. Residents should be engaged intellectually as a part of an inclusive and healthy community – each learning goal is critically important for every resident, regardless of major or academic interest. Listed below are the four overall learning goals for the residents of the undergraduate halls.

Promoting Well-being

Residents will learn about the eight dimensions of personal wellness (spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, creative, digital, emotional, vocational, environmental and financial), connect to campus and community resources and apply relevant tools for their personal well-being.

Community Engagement

Residents will gain opportunities to create meaningful connections that lead to the development of a sense of belonging in their community.

Social Responsibility

Residents will learn to engage as socially responsible members of their communities. This involves learning how to respect others of similar and different identities while responsibly addressing community concerns.

Lifelong Learning

Residents will gain knowledge and skills through opportunities in our residential communities that encourage actively engaging in learning experiences throughout their lifetime. Lifelong learning through

the Illinois experience promotes curiosity, resilience and independence to navigate an ever-changing world.

Identity and Cultural Exploration

Residents will embrace opportunities to learn that identities shape and influence how individuals experience the world. Navigating a complex global community requires an open-minded approach and willingness to learn from multiple perspectives and experiences.

A major learning outcome of the residential experience is the exposure to diversity, an appreciation of differences, and, perhaps most importantly, an increased value of opinions and backgrounds different from one's self.

“A survey of over 500 first-year undergraduates (Lopez) showed that students who reported more exposure to information and activities about other racial/ethnic groups as part of class or in their residence halls reported greater awareness of racial inequity within the United States at the end of their first year even after controlling for their initial political orientation and support for educational equity” (Lopez, 2004 in Smith et al. 2010).

Living-Learning *Communities*

University Housing's 10 LLCs are distinctive programs in the residence halls for students sharing common interests. LLCs have been found to provide substantial student benefits in academic success, a sense of belonging and opportunities for personal growth for decades. The 2019 National Survey of Student Engagement found students in LLCs are much more likely than their peers to meet with a faculty member in their place of residence, collaborate on a group project, study with peers or attend a social or co-curricular activity where they live.

In University Housing, each LLC offers its own special traditions and features, with ties to academic partners that enrich the LLC experience. LLCs offer courses for credit in the halls (including music lessons), close access to faculty, guest speakers and field trips. In the spring of 2024, LLCs offered 92 courses in residence halls.

"[LLC] participants were more engaged in effective educational practices that have been previously demonstrated to result in student learning and development, after adjusting for other student and institutional characteristics (NSSE, 2018). Similarly, [LLC] participation was positively associated with perceived curricular and co-curricular gains, self-reported grades, perceived impact of residence life on academic success, and perceptions of the campus environment" (Hurtado et al., 2020).

"Overall, living on campus and in living-learning communities can provide students with a plethora of opportunities for social interaction that in turn facilitate personal growth and intellectual development" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005 in Webber et al., 2013).



Business

The Business LLC is designed to serve students who wish to pursue business as a field of study, seek to enhance their interest in business or want to develop a foundational understanding of how business interacts with other fields.

Exploration

The Exploration LLC provides a community for students to explore their interests and abilities and how they translate into academic goals. Program staff include housing advisors as well as academic and career counselors to aid students in career preparation.

Global Crossroads

The Global Crossroads LLC is a community for students who are interested in world events, planning a future that includes international work/service or want to learn from different cultures.

Honors

Designed specifically for James Scholars and Campus Honors Program students, the Honors LLC community offers special interdisciplinary courses, allowing students greater interaction with Honors faculty. Curricular and co-curricular aspects are designed around the LLC's three pillars: inquiry, civic engagement and leadership.

Innovation

This community welcomes students who thrive on innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity. The Innovation LLC features The Garage, a dedicated workspace students can use as they develop new businesses and projects. On-site staff members are available to assist students as they navigate the ample entrepreneurial and creative resources on campus and in the surrounding area.

Intersections

The Intersections LLC is a close-knit community where students can find deeper ways to talk about race and culture, more fully understand different life experiences and points of view and learn to live in a diverse community.

Leadership Experience through Academic Development and Service (LEADS)

The LEADS LLC fosters and supports students' innate leadership in the community. Programming is focused on building self-development, communication skills and group dynamics, as well as exploring service opportunities both on campus and in the Champaign-Urbana community.

Sustainability

Sustainability LLC residents learn about diverse aspects of sustainability in a variety of ways: academically, organically and experientially. Students and professors of different backgrounds explore shared interest in and commitment to sustainable living.

Unit One/Allen Hall

Unit One is a living-learning community made up of all Allen Hall residents. The program provides students with a creative and intellectually stimulating atmosphere in a lively and engaging community – creating a close knit, liberal arts feel.

Women in Math, Science and Engineering (WIMSE)

The WIMSE community provides a supportive environment for undergraduate female students in a mathematics, science or engineering curriculum. WIMSE provides an active academic and social network designed to ease students' transition to the university and facilitate student academic success.

Key Messages *for* Students & Families

Central to University Housing's brand is the on-campus residential experience. These key messages listed below come from our surveys of students and are demonstrably related to top decision-making factors like cost, food options, convenience, safety and freedom.

Living with University Housing is convenient.

The services and amenities we provide save students from having to shop, cook and clean, allowing them to spend more time with friends made through our built-in communities and social events, or more time for studying in our study lounges, learning commons and computer labs.

University Housing has food options that fit student schedules and support eating well. All ten of our dining locations feature a wide variety of dishes (often made by our award-winning chefs) and inclusive dietary choices. Want food on the go? Grab a quick, hot meal at our retail locations or use the Good2Go Carry-Out option in one of our dining halls.

Our inclusive communities, live-on staff, card-swipe access and daily security patrols offer students a safe and secure living environment.

With six different meal plans, 26 residence halls and three apartments complexes, University Housing has options that meet students' needs and budgets across a variety of price points and living styles. We have flexible living terms, with our 9-month academic year contract options, and we'll release students from a residence hall contract for the spring semester if they pursue academic activities like student teaching or studying abroad.

Financial Considerations

Research shows University Housing options – both residence halls and apartments – are affordable and priced competitively when compared to mid-range apartment options off campus. University Housing, however, offers students a range of distinct benefits and student services that off-campus housing does not provide.

Internal cost comparison research completed in 2023 asked off-campus students to share their monthly budgets, including rent, groceries, eating out, laundry and utilities. When compared with University Housing room and meal plan costs, the research showed residence hall offerings are competitive with low budget and mid-range apartment options targeted at undergraduate students. More amenity-rich choices off-campus come with higher price points, making them less affordable for many students.

Survey data shows students who live with University Housing in the undergraduate residence halls report high levels of satisfaction with hall staff, safety and security and the community environment. Residents in apartments managed by University Housing are highly satisfied with location, cost, safety and the quiet living environment.

Comprehensive market rate research data, most recently compiled in 2019, also shows University Housing is price competitive with off-campus options. University Housing monthly rates for a room (without a meal plan) ranged from \$770 - \$927, and averaged \$853. Comparable off-campus options averaged \$848.

This minimal difference is noteworthy because of the all-inclusive value University

Housing provides. On-campus residence halls provide staffing, programming, security, 24-hour maintenance, cleaning and much more. These student-focused amenities allow our residents to focus on learning, which is something off-campus apartments do not provide.

University Housing also provides a constant rate for our residence halls, meaning the rate structure from a student's first year remains in place for subsequent years when they live continuously with University Housing. Like tuition, which is fixed for up to four years, the constant rate provides a way for students and families to budget effectively.

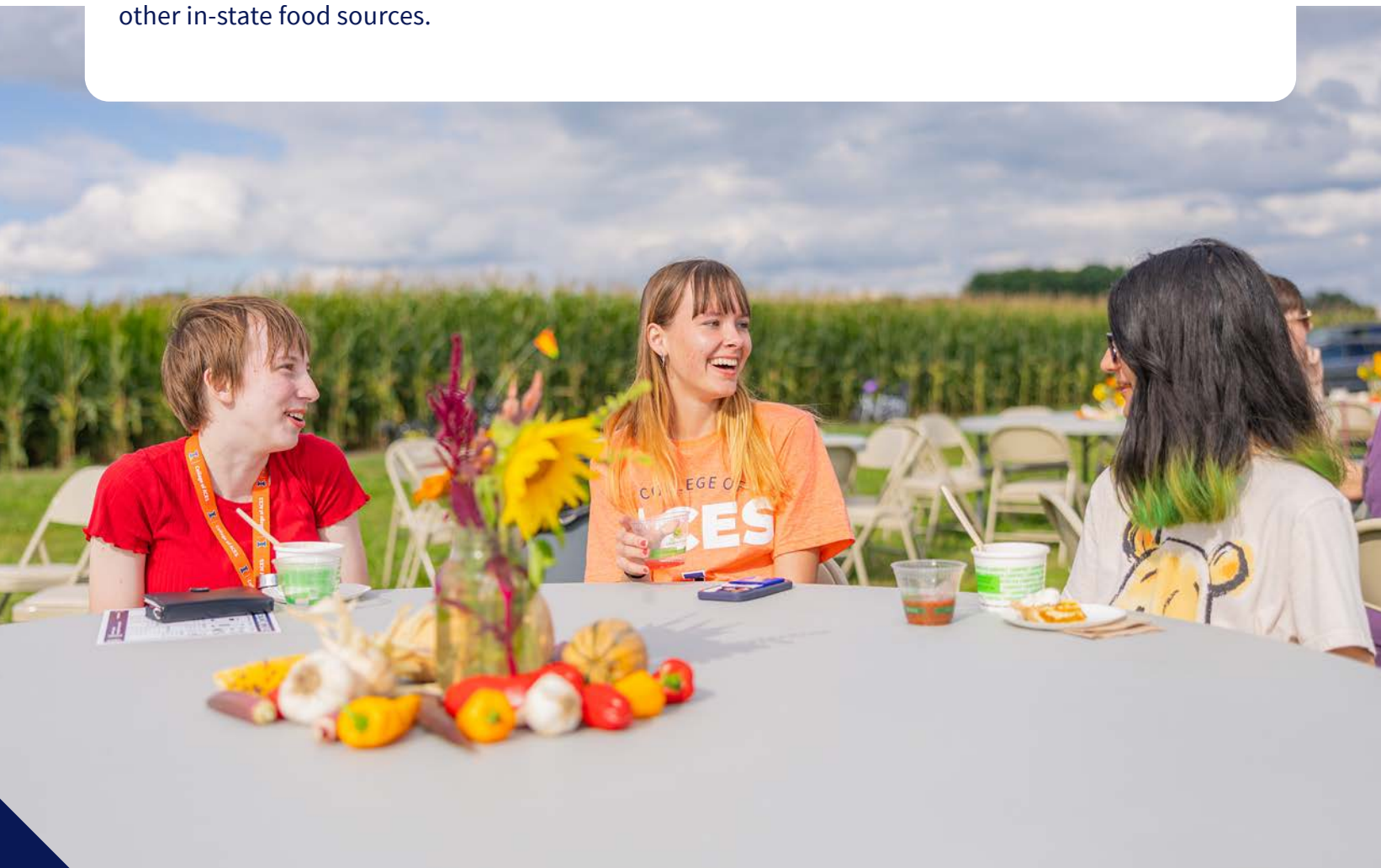


University Housing’s apartment rate structure is designed to provide an affordable living experience with close proximity to campus – our apartments are all just a quick bus ride away from the Illini Union. In recent market analyses, all three University Housing apartment complexes were shown to be affordable housing options. As with our residence halls, Housing staff provide our apartment residents with a wide range of supportive services and programming to help them succeed. Keeping University Housing apartment rates affordable remains a priority as we provide a safe, conveniently located community for graduate students, students with families, staff and visiting scholars to live in and thrive.

Sustainability

Reflecting university and student values, University Housing has invested considerable effort to become increasingly sustainable. Recycling stations are available in dining halls, hall floors, computer labs, laundry rooms, apartment communities and many other locations. Dining staff focus on purchasing local ingredients whenever possible – including from the Student Sustainable Farm, Meat Science Lab and ACES Pilot Processing Plant on campus, plus local bakeries, Prairie Farm dairy products and other in-state food sources.

90% of all produce grown at the Sustainable Student Farm is used in University Housing dining halls.



University Housing has changed the materials purchased for use in our dining halls – including bags, utensils, wrapping and more – from plastic products to biodegradable. Additionally, dining halls have made strides in using fewer single-use utensils. As a result, total plastic products used in University Housing dining halls decreased from 2022 to 2023 by more than one-third.

***78% of residents
became friends
with someone in
their building.***

University Housing staff operate six Grind2Energy systems, which turn food waste into energy and fertilizer. Through this and other waste reduction programs, University Housing diverts nearly seven tons of food from going to the landfill each week.

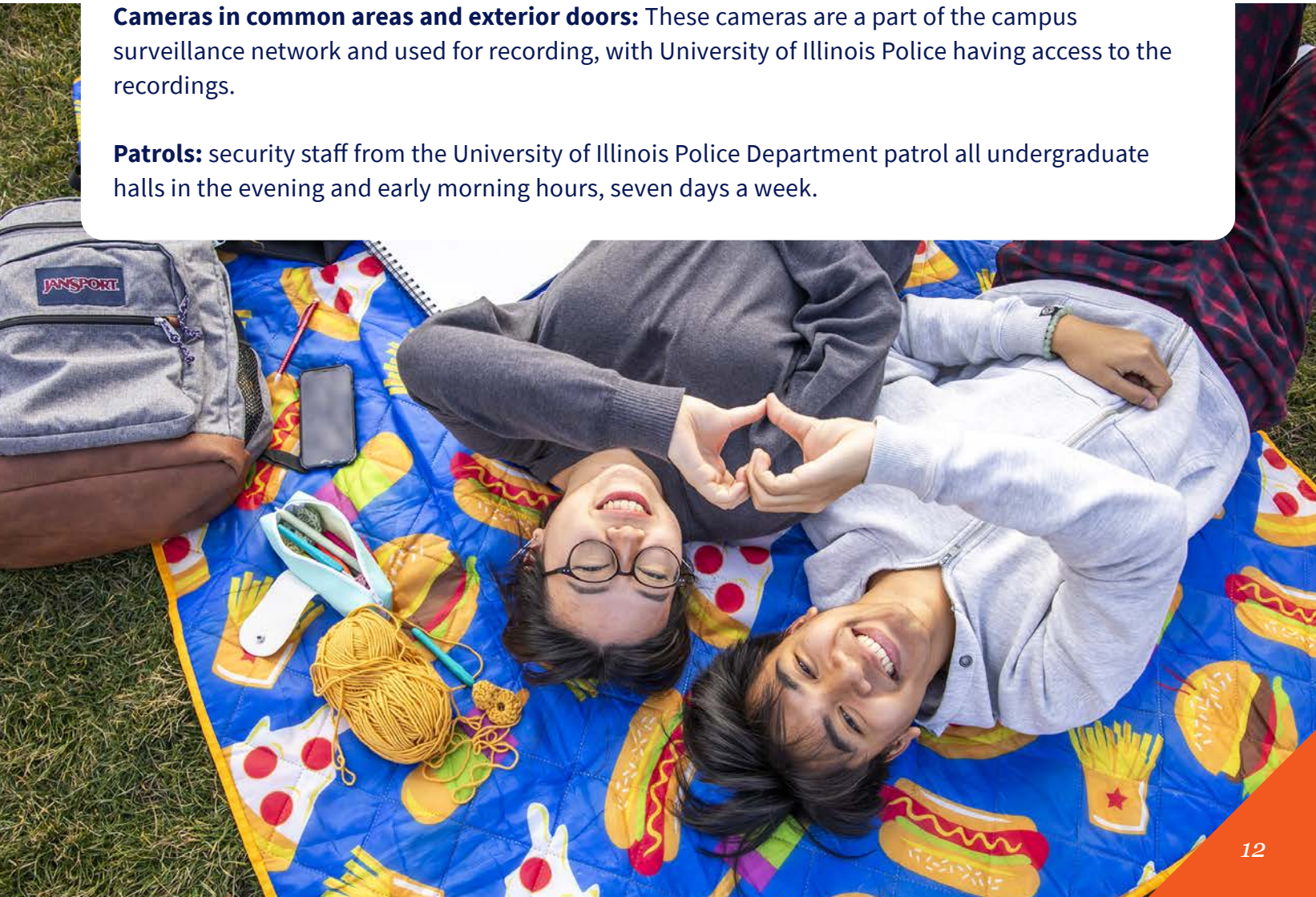
Safety and Security

In addition to the services provided by professional and paraprofessional staff, University Housing employs many security features for residents. These features are uncommon in the private sector.

Door card access: Exterior doors and doors to each floor are locked 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Residents use their i-cards for entry.

Cameras in common areas and exterior doors: These cameras are a part of the campus surveillance network and used for recording, with University of Illinois Police having access to the recordings.

Patrols: security staff from the University of Illinois Police Department patrol all undergraduate halls in the evening and early morning hours, seven days a week.





Inclusiveness Statement

University Housing staff value the multitude of different voices, opinions, experiences and identities of the Illinois community. We respect and honor each member of the communities in which we work and live, inclusive of all aspects of individual and group identity and experience. Our commitment is woven into each of our interactions, programs and decisions.

Mission Statement

University Housing at the University of Illinois is an essential element of the Illinois experience. We create communities that transform student lives.

Vision

University Housing communities create success for every student.

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Student Affairs