ILLINOIS
University Housing

2017-2018 | Annual Report

student affairs AT ILLINOIS
University Housing experienced many successes and responded to several challenges in 2017-2018. A success of particular note was the kick-off of the $77 million Illinois Street Residence Halls Renovation + Addition project and the subsequent temporary projects within the Illini Union (temporary dining) and the modular classroom in the Wardall Hall parking lot for programmatic space. Along with several successful facility projects, University Housing staff were engaged in the student experience in the following ways — receiving a grant for expansion of the Researcher’s Initiative (Residential Life); integration of the Illinois Residential Experience within residence halls and apartment communities (Family & Graduate Housing, Residential Life); participating in 90 outreach events for over 15,000 prospective students and their guests (Housing Information & Marketing); and, hosting members of the Illinois and Louisiana Departments of Natural Resources and respective members of state government to address the invasive carp species, silverfin, within our waterways (Dining Services), to name a few.

The information within this annual report highlights many of our successes and our challenges. While it does not reflect everything that occurred within the department this past year, it does highlight the dedication and resilience of our staffs’ efforts in meeting student needs and improving the student experience.

All my best — Alma R. Sealine

UNIVERSITY HOUSING STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal #1 Foster scholarship, collaboration, discovery, and innovation
Goal #2 Provide transformative learning experiences
Goal #3 Make a significant and visible societal and community impact
Goal #4 Steward current resources and generate additional resources for strategic investments
ACCOMPLISHMENTS & CHALLENGES

Illinois Street Residence Halls (ISR) Project Launch

A multifaceted renovation project at the Illinois Street Residence (ISR) Halls officially began on May 14, 2018. The first phase of the Illinois Street Residence Dining Facility Renovation + Addition project encompasses 155,500 square feet and will cost $77 million. The second phase is the ISR Townsend and Wardall Halls Renovation and involves a renovation of 210,295 square feet of both residence halls, and will cost an additional $53.5 million. Phase 1 will be completed summer 2020 and Phase 2 will be completed summer 2021.

University Housing staff worked diligently to ensure success by creating an ISR Operations Committee and launching a promotional campaign. Staff spent the last year reviewing renovation details and initiating solutions to the renovations’ impact on students, staff, and customers, with the goal to provide continued services within the complex. The marketing team collected 79 campaign theme ideas from residents and staff before choosing Redefining Home.

The operations committee developed move-out plans for staff, equipment, technology, and third-party vendors while also preparing for contractors’ work and continued services in the fall. Some examples of the complex work overseen by the committee includes physically emptying spaces; reviewing fire evacuation plans and locations of door security and security cameras; planning temporary dining space; and creating temporary programmatic space.

University Housing also collaborated with the Illini Union to create temporary dining options in the Union through 2020 — Blue 41 in the Illini Union Ballroom and Orange on Green in the former Colonial Room. CHOMPS retail location and the Good2Go food truck provide additional dining venues available in or near ISR. New temporary service locations, including an area desk, individual study spaces, and computer labs, were created and the majority of these services will be found in a modular building outside of ISR.

ISR will be a new-and-improved facility to serve residents, prospective students and their families, staff, faculty, and visitors beginning fall 2020.
Strategic Occupancy

University Housing strategically studies occupancy in the residence halls and apartments to meet the department’s mission and goals. This year, Family & Graduate Housing (FGH) celebrated a 90 percent annual apartment occupancy average and an extremely strong apartment renewal rate (82 percent of eligible leaseholders). FGH staff attribute this success to excellent customer service, outstanding community environments, and affordable apartment rates.

Another variable is the different expectations today’s students have for their college experience and living environment. Housing leadership weighs many factors — amenities, programs and services, and cost — and continuously works toward increasing new or renovated residence hall options. For example, after the completion of the Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls (PAR) complex upgrades — new individual-use bathrooms, refreshed student room furnishings, and newly installed air conditioning — incoming students self-assigned to PAR at a higher rate.

The Strategic Occupancy Management Team (OMT) studies multiple factors related to undergraduate and graduate residence hall occupancy. Residence hall occupancy is less predictable and is more susceptible to uncontrolled variables. One variable, the number of admitted students (new freshman and transfers) combined with the number of students who reassign to Housing, directly affects the Housing occupancy rate. Typically, 73–74 percent of new freshman choose to live in University Housing and the remaining 26–27 percent live in a Private Certified Housing (PCH) facility.

National Trends — Influencing Campus Climate

University Housing staff members continue to respond to students with mental health issues, students who use and abuse illegal substances or prescription drugs, and students who have a challenging mindset toward individuals different from themselves. Situations of bias and intolerance have become more complex and occasionally involve overt acts of aggression. In 2017–2018, instances of discrimination targeting students of color and students with specific religious beliefs occurred. Other issues including depression and attempted suicide were also present within the community. An increase in such incidents led Housing to hire a new program director for community standards to assist with Title IX cases, mental health case management, and ongoing judicial hearings.

The national political environment is another factor that affected residential and campus communities, and challenged the Residential Life staff’s desire to build inclusive communities. Immigration and border issues directly impacted international students and conference guests as some had to cancel their travel to the United States. In the fall, the abduction and presumed death of Ying Ying Zhang, a visiting scholar and resident of Orchard Downs, adversely affected the perception of safety within the international community. Family & Graduate Housing staff amplified their commitment to educating the apartment community regarding personal safety, protection of children, and security of property.

The Student Judicial and Leadership Education (SJLE) staff in Residential Life collaborated with the Conflict Clinic to host restorative circles. Two successful circles took place in response to race and gender based vandalism and interpersonal conflict related to Palestine and Israel. Participating residents committed multiple hours to learning and repairing harm in the residential communities.

Housing will continue to support, develop, and provide resources for student and professional staff who respond to residential incidents and needs. Housing will also continue to build and strengthen relationships with Student Affairs and campus colleagues who collaborate in these important and vital services.
Silverfin

2017–2018 was a year of progress related to silverfin; an invasive carp species with an estimated number of 15,500 per river mile (2017). Dining Services is changing perceptions about silverfin. Through an alliance with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a first-of-its-kind project was launched to address this invasive species from rivers in Illinois to the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico. Many stakeholders, including the Illinois and Louisiana Departments of Natural Resources and the Lieutenant Governors from the same states, traveled to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to celebrate these new partnerships to market and raise awareness of the species. Use of this low-cost protein meets goals outlined in the Local Foods, Farms, and Jobs Act 2020, and will add to the sustainable environment in the residence halls. Each year, Dining Services will utilize an estimated 20,000 pounds of silverfin as a healthy, local ingredient. As Chef Philippe Parola, silverfin Group, Inc., stated, “If you can’t beat ‘em, eat ‘em!”.

Procurement Challenges & Successes

University Housing oversees millions of dollars in spending annually. Procuring goods and services to successfully operate a complex department is of vital importance. Purchasing in the State of Illinois, subject to the Illinois Procurement Code, has become an overwhelming challenge. This year, additional purchasing guidelines outlined in the Administrative Rules directly increased the workload for departments and the campus purchasing office.

One example involved a recent interpretation of bid limits. The annual bid limit of $100,000 is applied to consecutive purchases over a ten-year period. Therefore, annual purchases as low as $10,000 from the same vendor would require a bid or justification for ongoing purchase. This new rule interpretation has a significant effect on food vendors and software maintenance contracts and justification to even purchase relatively small maintenance contracts is now required. Required bids may force a change to a new system; this would interrupt business operations, increase costs related to purchasing a new system, and require additional staff time to implement and train on the new system.

On a positive note, the ability to utilize the Vizient contract for Housing’s dining prime vendor has been a huge success. The Vizient contract is a nationally awarded contract through a group purchasing organization (GPO) that allows Housing to continue using US Foodservice. Before the Vizient contract option, the Illinois Public Higher Education Cooperative (IPHEC) would have awarded the contract to Gordon Food Service Distributors (GFS), an out-of-state vendor. That award would have increased food costs by $2.5 million. Additionally, the Food, Farms, and Jobs Act in Illinois requires any state institution to purchase 20 percent of their food products within state borders by the year 2020 (defined as locally grown, produced, and distributed).

Staff Challenges

University Housing has a strong personnel team with many staff in numerous positions. 2017–2018 marked a year of change with many staff exiting to new opportunities and retirements, leaving Housing to rebuild and begin new collaborations.

- A new senior assistant director for Housing Human Resources was hired and provided an opportunity to review the structure of Housing Human Resources. The new senior assistant director will serve on the University Housing Executive Team.
- Employee absences because of unscheduled leave — family medical leave (FMLA), sick leave, unexcused absences — takes a toll on unit operations in University Housing and has a direct link to overtime. A team of collaborators across auxiliaries and campus human resources met to discuss the use of FMLA leave. The group worked with the University of Illinois Business Process Improvement program to identify next steps in addressing FMLA abuse.
- Family & Graduate Housing and Residential Life leadership studied procedures and staffing levels concerning the three academic break periods to address discrepancies between the undergraduate and graduate hall staffing practices. Goals are to ensure appropriate staffing levels and duty coverage, particularly related to break staffing models and consistent compensation.
- Housing Facilities staff also experienced a year of transition, particularly related to vacancies. Staff worked to maintain coordination and supervision of many projects, ensuring high levels of customer service, and responding to routine and emergency requests. New positions included an assistant director facilities maintenance, assistant director facilities planning, interior design assistant, a pipefitter dedicated to dining facilities, and three new building service foremen.
- University Housing combined the Housing Information and Communications and Marketing teams into one unit — Housing Information & Marketing. The successful hires of a senior assistant director for communication and marketing, assistant director of housing information, videographer, graphic designer, and new coordinator for housing information increased the strength of the team.
- Under a new associate director, Residential Life staff experienced challenges when half of the full-time positions became vacant for varied reasons. Many staff members stepped up to keep operations and service levels consistent for months to ease the transition while vacant positions were filled.
**CHANGES**

**TMA Systems — Maintenance Management Software**

To directly impact the residential experience, Housing Facilities staff are developing management and building service teams in an effort to be more knowledgeable and successful in their work and to increase customer satisfaction as it relates to facility improvements. Staff members focused on TMA (facilities management software) and attended national training, resulting in utilizing best practices of the TMA system. Another accomplishment is a new collaboration between University Housing and the Illini Union, where the Illini Union will have access to the TMA facilities management software.

**DIVERSITY EFFORTS**

**Diversity — University Housing Residents, Staff & Guests Celebrate**

- 2017–2018 marked the 15th year of the Multicultural Advocate (MA) Program in the undergraduate residence halls. Housing staff members hosted an interactive day-long educational conference with Student Affairs partners and alumni returning to campus to present and participate.

- Salongo, the Black Student Union in the Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls (PAR), celebrated 50 years. Alumni attended a celebratory banquet where they shared stories, and current students provided entertainment.

- Resident Kathleen Downes, a master’s in social work intern, led a MA training session about the disabled community that provided techniques for staff and students to provide more inclusive programming. Staff members purchased materials to improve the creation of accessible spaces for participants with disabilities.

- Residential Life staff trained all desk clerks on customer service, bystander intervention, and social justice skills to improve the front-line experience for residents and guests.

- Family & Graduate Housing staff members offered parenting classes in conjunction with the Crisis Nursery and other agencies in an effort to support student and non-student parents in the University Housing apartment communities.

- Dining Services staff members eased Chinese student’s entry into the student workforce by translating the Dining Services Student Employee Handbook into Mandarin.

**ASSESSMENT**

**Illinois Residential Experience (IRE)**

The Residential Life and Family & Graduate Housing (FGH) staff members collaborated to strengthen the Illinois Residential Experience (IRE), the housing community curriculum implemented in 2016. The IRE team worked diligently to expand the curriculum and create tools such as rubrics for learning outcomes. Within the last year, the staff developed lesson plans, assessment tools, and a strategy chart necessary for the full implementation of the IRE. The FGH team requires more planning to apply the curriculum concepts to the diverse apartment community.

The iConvos — individual, strategically guided conversations between residents and staff — are meant to extract student-learning outcomes for each residential community. An assessment to aggregate hundreds of iConvos revealed trends and provides an opportunity to draft intentional response strategies for each major trend. The iConvos is the initial conversation residents have with their resident advisor (RA). RAs completed 8,042 iConvos conversations. Residents were surveyed regarding their conversations with the RA. Of the 2,400 survey responses, 39 percent of residents felt their responsibilities in the community were “respect,” and 54 percent responded, “cleanliness related.” When answering the ways the residents hope to benefit from living in the community, the highest response (53.26 percent) was “make friends.” The next highest answer (8.61 percent) was “academic success/learning skills.” The IRE is creating a stronger learning environment in all of the residential communities.

**Other Assessments**

- A customer survey by the Illinois Conference Center rated the quality and presentation of food and beverages served at conference center events in 2017 and resulted in Excellent (75 percent-147) or Very Good (20 percent-39) out of 195 responses.

- The Dining Services secret shopper program provided feedback on services and meals using the Touchwork software system that allows customers to rate and upload pictures of their dining room or retail experience anonymously. Customers rated food, facility, customer service, and overall experience from Very Good to Very Poor.

- The Dining Services Text and Tell survey allowed customers to provide feedback in real time about their dining experience. Over the past year, staff responded to 1,737 text messages. The overall customer rating was 78.19 percent, which is a 5 percent increase in customer satisfaction from 2017. The Florida Avenue (FAR) Dining Hall had the highest rating at 89.8 percent.

- In fall 2017, 19 percent of Daniels Hall and Sherman Hall residents completed the ACHUO-1 Skyfactor benchmarking survey. High ratings were given for the quality of customer services at the front desks, community atmosphere, and personal safety.
Projects

There are many types of projects in University Housing — strategic, business, facilities, and technology. In 2017-2018, Housing Facilities coordinated 111 projects with an estimated value of $102,075,800. Individual projects ranged from $500 to $77.5 million, with many projects spanning multiple fiscal years.

Highlights

- Responded to an emergency life safety issue at the Ashton Woods apartment complex by removing and replacing building facades.
- Renovated the lobby and entrance to Florida Avenue Residence Halls (FAR) to respond to residents’ needs.
- Installed 225 window air-conditioning units in Orchard Downs and Orchard South apartments.
- Updated student rooms in Blaisdell and Saunders Halls in Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls (PAR) with new flooring, doors, desktops, paint; cleaned HVAC convector units; and installed new window air-conditioning units last summer. Completed the same updates this summer for Babcock and Carr Halls in PAR. Improved student satisfaction became apparent when only three rooms remained open after the student self-selection process, a first for this community.
- Updated the FAR HVAC system two summers in a row (similar to PAR) — Oglesby Hall in 2017 and Trelease Hall in 2018.
- Replaced the original Busey-Evans Hall slate roof to address significant leaks.
- Installed ADA crash bars in meeting rooms within the Student Dining and Residential Programs (SDRP) building.
- Expanded Penn Station, a retail dining location in PAR, to increase customer capacity.
- Installed wireless access and wired computer stations in the Family & Graduate Housing Multicultural Health Center.
- Added wireless service to 28 Orchard Down guest apartments.
- Auxiliary Shared Technology Services (ASTS) and Housing Payroll collaborated to expand the housing employment system, adding approximately 2,000 student employee records to the system.
- On July 1, 2017, implemented a comprehensive Banner FOP account restructure project that began FY17 in Business Services. Training staff on the new structure, correcting errors, and accessing newly structured reports remains a priority.
- Created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to respond to the Illini Union and University Housing collaboration in meeting ISR student dining needs. University Housing contributed $2.5 million to improve the Illini Union facilities, including an upgraded dock and new windows.

2018–2019 University Housing Staff Goals
(In No Particular Order)

- Review and determine assessment practices
- Create and review Housing policies and procedures
- Review Housing financials and respective occupancy impacts
- Keep ISR Renovation + Addition projects on time and under budget
- Occupancy planning
- Potential P3 initiatives
- Staff compensation and equity review
- Review and update staff development and training practices