The 2019-2020 academic year has been one of the most unique for University Housing. It started with a ‘gustnado’ during Move-In and ended with a world pandemic named COVID-19. The challenges experienced throughout the academic year brought about new ways of doing our work and collaborating in significant ways with many campus stakeholders. Even with these many challenges and opportunities, our staff and students continued to create communities that transform student lives.

Two incidents with a profound impact on staff and students included a noose found in an Allen Hall elevator and an alleged anti-Semitic program in Weston Hall. These incidents attracted a great deal of local and national press and the chancellor mandated anti-Semitism training, and internal and external reviews of the Resident Advisor/Multicultural Advocate Program. The review findings will direct our staffing efforts within Family & Graduate Housing and Residential Life. These incidents brought about significant campus climate issues and on-going departmental needs. A new director of inclusion and talent development position was created to assist with the department’s efforts moving forward.

Beginning August 2020, the Illinois Street Residence Halls (ISR) Renovation + Addition project and the Townsend Hall Renovation will be available for student use. These projects have generated a great deal of excitement within and outside the University. As a result of incredible teamwork between architects, construction managers, Facilities & Services, and our own Housing staff, ISR will include 1,386 seats for students to experience a world-class dining facility, new programmatic space for the Innovation Living-Learning Community, residential library and learning commons. The Townsend Residence Hall remodel will provide single-use restrooms and new student room finishes. A dedication ceremony is planned for March 2021.

The largest disruption for all occurred in the spring semester with COVID-19. We could not have anticipated the outcome and effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the campus, community, and world. We moved our regular operations online in the middle of March and moved out over 5,500 students in four days in order to comply with the governor’s stay-at-home orders. Approximately 500 students remained with us in continued housing in the Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls (PAR), Daniels Hall, and Sherman Hall, as well as continued occupancy in our three apartment communities. Our dining operation implemented new Champaign-Urbana Public Health District guidelines to maintain six feet physical distancing, wore personal protective equipment, and staff served all meals. Staff have also managed a deluge of information requests with ever-changing parameters and deadlines. As I write this, we are working on, and with, a variety of campus committees to determine what Fall 2020 will look like on campus.

These are unprecedented times and we have been asked to think about University Housing differently. The resiliency and determination of our residents and staff have assisted in determining the residential experience for the future. I would encourage you to read through our annual report to learn more about the amazing work of University Housing during these unique times.

All my best -

Alma R. Sealine
Executive Director of University Housing
BIAS AND INTOLERANCE INCIDENT AND RESPONSE

The fall semester began with several challenges — a theme that continued through the semester with incidents of intolerance. Over Labor Day weekend, a group of African American Allen Hall residents discovered a noose hanging in the main elevator. The incident was reported to hall staff and the University of Illinois Police Department began an investigation. Unfortunately, the details of the incident were immediately and widely shared on social media, which impacted the perception of the department’s response.

In the days following the incident, the vice chancellor for Student Affairs and her team, ranging from the Counseling Center, Dean of Students Office, to University Housing, hosted several student meetings. Meetings were held at Allen Hall, the Florida Avenue Residence Halls (FAR) following the weekly Central Black Student Union meeting, and at the Student Dining and Programmatic Building during the monthly Housing Leadership Coalition meeting. These meetings were an opportunity to listen to student concerns and address issues of racism and safety on campus, particularly for students of color. Because staff reported trauma from the incident, two clinicians from the Counseling Center facilitated a two-hour group session for the Allen Hall paraprofessional staff during their regularly scheduled meeting that same week.

ANTI-SEMITISM TRAINING

After a multicultural advocate (MA) peer training session on Palestine in October, a Bias and Response Team report was submitted indicating the program included anti-Semitic content. The concerns escalated to the Chancellor’s Office and the Governor’s Office and resulted in a chancellor’s campus-wide email requiring University Housing staff to attend mandatory anti-Semitism training. Over four days in January and February 2020, Housing held nine mandatory training sessions for staff facilitated by representatives from the Jewish United Fund in Chicago.

A total of 695 full- and part-time staff, including resident advisor (RA) and MA staff, attended this training.

PARAPROFESSIONAL STAFF CONCERNS

The Allen Hall incident and multicultural advocate (MA) presentation resulted in several paraprofessional staff expressing feelings of frustration and a lack of support from Residential Life, University Housing, and Student Affairs. The student staff of color, immediately responding to the Allen Hall noose incident, had very strong reactions to the incident, which was not immediately reported or apparent to the on-call staff. Whereas, the MA staff were primarily involved with the anti-Semitism concern. The staff in both incidents experienced extreme declines in morale and trust of staff in Housing and leadership across campus. Questions arose about the paraprofessional program, training, and supervision. The incidents and the subsequent responses of students, staff, and administrators prompted an internal and external review of the program, currently in progress.

On January 18, 2020, all Residential Life and Family & Graduate Housing paraprofessionals and their respective supervisory lines attended a full-day training on self-care and trauma response, facilitated by the Washington Consulting Group.
COVID-19 CHALLENGES

The first COVID-19 case in Illinois was reported on January 24, 2020. By February 1, University Housing had provided information to all residents about the virus. At the end of February, a COVID-19 web page was added to the Housing website. Cleaning protocols included continuing flu season protocols of disinfecting high-touch surfaces. Dining Services updated protocols with staff serving meals and no-touch access for entry.

On March 9, the governor of Illinois issued a disaster proclamation, and on March 13 closed K-12 schools statewide triggering a rush to respond.

- Many Housing staff were deemed essential, including Dining, Facilities, Residential Life, and Family & Graduate Housing staff.
- The residence hall move-out process started, stopped, and started again as the governor’s stay-at-home orders progressed.
- Essential Facilities staff packed student belongings to speed up move out in Bousfield and Wassaja halls in anticipation of an agreement between the University and Carle Health Systems to use residence hall space.
- All residents unable to leave campus were relocated to Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls (PAR), Sherman Hall, and Daniels Hall, with onsite dining at PAR.

As time progressed, further announcements triggered additional action. Summer camps and conferences were canceled through July 10 and the stay-at-home order was extended through May 29, 2020.

- Housing Facilities maintenance and building services staff converted to 50% coverage on campus.
- Many staff were equipped to work remotely where possible.
- The financial impacts to Housing and the campus were overwhelming as the refund of room and board and the continuity of pay for temporary, student, and full-time staff were processed.
- New processing codes were established in payroll systems based on requirements from Illinois Human Resources/University Payroll and Benefits. Housing Human Resources tackled changes in reporting for leave benefits, on-call staff pay, and tracking time within different categories to respond to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act guidelines.

Since University Housing continues to be a 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year operation, it was necessary to evaluate, plan, and change immediately so services would continue.

- Daniels, Sherman, and the PAR halls continued to operate for the remainder of the spring semester. The graduate upper-division halls maintained a 24-hour desk operation. Residential Life and Family & Graduate Housing staff quickly collaborated to provide services to residents and staff.
- Apartment residents continued to receive services from staff working remotely. The apartment community continued with 81-85% occupancy.
- Orchard Downs Preschool and After School Program, although closed for in-person classes, maintained contact with students through video chat, calls, and emails to provide educational opportunities and support to the children and families.
- Communications to residents continued with online group activities and contacts to resident groups.

As the spring semester closed, the remaining residents who had left their belongings in the unused residence halls were assigned move-out time slots to return to campus under new guidelines for social distancing.

Although much was accomplished through these challenges, more work will be required to recover from the 2019-2020 academic year.
FINANCIAL IMPACTS

University Housing finances were altered by the continuation of state-mandated minimum wage increases.

- FY20 estimated impact is $115,000.
- Original estimated impact for FY21 is an additional $685,000.
- Staff continue to review student positions to clarify job descriptions and determine if positions can be compressed or adjusted to aid ongoing financial challenges.
- Executive Team reviewed and approved a plan for FY21 that any positions paid over the new minimum wage will not receive an across the board increase.

In 2019-2020 staff shortages and challenges altered the work environment.

- Many staff resigned in Residential Life and Dining Services — mostly due to other job opportunities.
- Staff worked diligently to protect departmental services and cover additional responsibilities.
- Creative and timely responses required the use of academic hourly and/or extra help employees.
- Additional complications arose as staff continued to respond to unexpected significant issues throughout the year.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & AWARDS

- The Dining Services Inclusive Solutions Program received the 2019 Student Affairs Outstanding Program Award. Students have shared the Inclusive Solutions Program was a primary reason they chose to live in University Housing past their first year — approximately 30% of the students continue to live on campus. The Inclusive Solutions Program participation increased 110% from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020.
- Pastry Chef, Eric Larson, re-created Altgeld Hall and the Illinois Alma Mater into gingerbread form, which were featured in the university’s annual holiday message from Chancellor Robert Jones.

STRATEGIC OCCUPANCY

2019-2020 residence hall and apartment occupancy was affected by many factors.

- The number of new, first-time attending freshman enrolled on day 10 of classes for Fall 2019, was 7,665 students. University Housing undergraduate and graduate residence halls obtained 8,694 contracts, which included returning residents and new freshman. The residence halls capacity of 8,791 confirmed a 99% occupancy rate on day 10 of classes.
- The new construction growth in the private apartment market continues to challenge the ability to attract and retain returning residents across all types of certified housing.
- The Occupancy Management Team continues to examine space, plans for renovated or new space, student needs and preferences, budgetary opportunities or restrictions, market trends, and current and historical occupancy data.
- The day 10 University Housing apartment occupancy for Fall 2019 was 89% of the 1,122 capacity of leased apartments. Although the percent leased was a decrease from Fall 2018, the cause was related to projects and apartments not repaired within the limited turnover time. Housing continues to address significant facilities challenges to keep apartments in good condition, including updating electrical panels, replacing tile, and initiating more extensive remodeling.
SUSTAINABILITY IN UNIVERSITY HOUSING

DINING SERVICES

• The Sustainable Student Farm, founded in 2009, celebrated 10 years of operation. Featuring local ingredients, Dining Services residential chefs prepared both lunch for the campus and local community, and dinner for alumni and donors.

• Dining Services and University Catering continue to work toward reducing or eliminating purchases of plastic straws and serving products. New biodegradable disposables have been introduced, including plates and cutlery made from fallen palm leaves through VerTerra, a socially and environmentally responsible company. (Some of these efforts may be halted during the COVID-19 response, which necessitates the use of disposable serving products.)

• Dining Services implemented new policies to support food donations to local non-profits and reduce food waste. In response to the Illinois Procurement Code, Dining Services developed a policy to permit the donation of leftover food procured by state funds. While Dining Services was already actively making donations of food, this State Act and departmental policy encouraged new organization and tightened processes and reduced food waste. In 2019, Dining Services donated 6,883 pounds of food to local non-profit organizations.

• Dining Services collaborated with the Native American Cultural House to host a dinner and discussion with Chef Pete Halfaday and Activist Paul DeMain of the Ojibwe Tribe. The program discussed food sovereignty and activism and included a food demonstration with sustainable indigenous ingredients.

DIVERSITY IN UNIVERSITY HOUSING

• In collaboration with the Office of Procurement Diversity and Facilities & Services, all areas of Housing Facilities are focusing on intentional procurement practices to seek information from certified WBE and MBE vendors as part of the Supplier Diversity Program. This includes hiring contractors through Contractor Services and requesting quotes for routine purchase of supplies.

• Within University Housing hiring practices, staff actively seek diverse candidates. Opportunities of candidate pools that are composed of well-qualified individuals from varying backgrounds provides opportunities to diversify teams. New employees hired during 2019-2020 included individuals presenting visually as diverse in gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as diverse country of origin.

• University Housing hired its first director for inclusion and talent development. This position will be responsible for leading diversity, equity, and inclusive initiatives, as well as training and development efforts across the department.
ILLINOIS APP

In partnership with Rokwire and various departments on campus, University Housing helped pilot the launch of the Illinois App to help students and visitors navigate the complex campus community via a personalized digital experience. With the tagline “Bringing the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to Your Fingertips,” the App features information about campus events, sports, wellness, health, and resources for residents, including dining menus, laundry services, and Illini Cash.

TMA EXPANSION

Housing Facilities and Student Affairs Technology partnered to implement and add the Custodial and Key Management modules in the TMA system to ensure data entry is thorough, accurate, and useful. The custodial module will enhance building services efforts through efficient management of workflow processes, personnel assignments and responsibilities, area inspections, and supplies. The key management module will assist in organizing information pertaining to locks, key systems, cores, and cylinders for all University Housing buildings.

MOBILE INVENTORY IN DINING SERVICES

In August 2019, Dining Services staff began to use the CBORD Mobile Inventory software program on iPads for a more intuitive, user-friendly method to record inventory in all dining units. It is accessible offline in areas with poor Wi-Fi access like walk-in coolers and freezers, allowing data to be uploaded once Wi-Fi is reconnected. Accurately recording inventory with ease enables tighter control of food costs and reduces food waste.
ORCHARD DOWNS APARTMENT COMMUNITY

- The Orchard Downs apartment building remodel included 15 apartments with the goal to create one ADA compliant one-bedroom apartment and update the other units consistent to past apartment remodel phases.
- Orchard Place apartment electrical upgrade project continues and includes several phases. The current phase is nearing completion with only three buildings left to be updated.

ISR RENOVATION AND ADDITION PROJECT

The Illinois Street Residence Halls (ISR) Dining facility renovation was substantially completed May 19, 2020. The Townsend Hall renovation project is on schedule and will open for residents in August 2020. Although both project schedules were impacted with the COVID-19 safety protocols, the projects will be ready to open Fall 2020. The $77M dining project and $55M Townsend renovation project significantly improve the ISR complex adding a 1,386-seat dining center and programmatic space improvements encompassing 125,000 square feet. The dining center includes nine micro-restaurants. The programmatic space includes the Innovation Living-Learning Community, lounge space, residential library and learning commons, embedded Counseling Center, reflection room, and workout space.

Accolades to the university have been woven into the design including a Block I in the terrazzo flooring of the ISR lobbies, Alma Mater lyrics and a panoramic image of the Round Barns in the ISR Dining Center, and use of Illinois colors in various programmatic and community spaces.

The Illinois brand is even incorporated within the name of Table 1867, the demonstration kitchen micro-restaurant, and the logo for InfiniTEA, the tea bar located on the lower level of the facility. The Dining project utilized the skills of Booth Hanson Architects, Baker Group food service consultants, and Turner Construction. Canon Design Architects and Turner Construction teamed up to improve the residential experience in Townsend and Wardall halls creating single use restrooms, upgrading finishes, and installing new windows and a new 2-pipe HVAC system.

The ISR Wardall Hall renovation began (May 2020) and is scheduled to open in Fall 2021.

University Housing will dedicate the new dining and residence hall space during a ceremony in March 2021.

GRIND2ENERGY

The 2019-2020 year saw the first implementation of the Grind2Energy (G2E) system in University Housing with installation at FAR Dining Hall. Operation of the FAR system resulted in 48 tons of food waste diverted from the landfill in nine months. In partnership between Housing and the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District (UCSD), the food waste processed from FAR is transported to the UCSD where it is converted to energy through anaerobic digestion. Additional sites for G2E in Housing include the newly renovated ISR Dining Center, as well as the Ikenberry Dining Center, both of which will be installed and implemented for Fall 2020.

2. Continue to provide insight and expertise to the university conversations regarding the COVID-19 response.

3. Continue to transition the new director of inclusion & talent development in responding to departmental inclusion, diversity, and equity goals, as well as providing needed departmental training.

4. Plan and implement the ISR Renovation Dedication Ceremony – March 2021.

5. Successfully complete the renovation of Wardall Hall - May 2021.

6. Provide leadership and insight to the department and campus in response to the cultural challenges, including anti-racism efforts and the 2020 Presidential Election.
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