

Resident Satisfaction in the UI Residence Halls

In late November and early December of 2008, University of Iowa residence hall students were asked to complete a satisfaction survey regarding many aspects of residence hall living. This is the fifth year University Housing has administered this particular survey, which was developed by a national company (Educational Benchmarking, Inc.). The survey allows the department a comparison with other institutions. The results of the resident satisfaction survey show that the great majority of students are satisfied with the aspects of residence hall living, although some students are more satisfied than others. Over 54% of the residents completed all or part of the online survey instrument. This article highlights some of the results, along with how we plan to use this information.

Each question asked in the survey generated a satisfied mean response, with many being very satisfied with certain aspects of the residence hall staffing and programs. The questions listed are those with the highest percentage of students who rated the questions with some level of satisfaction (minimally, moderately, very). With these same questions, only 2-5% of the students listed any type of dissatisfaction (minimally, moderately, very).

Question:	Percent Satisfied
Satisfaction with attitude of the cleaning staff	93%
Satisfaction with how safe you feel in the residence hall	92%
Satisfaction with how safe you feel in your room	91%
Extent that residents respect people of differing genders	89%
Degree to which you respect other students on your floor	89%
Extent that residents respect people of different races/ethnicities	88%
Satisfaction with cable TV services	88%
Satisfaction with information desk services	87%
Satisfaction with RA on floor regarding respecting ethnic diversity	86%
Satisfaction with RA on floor regarding rules and regulations	86%
Satisfaction with RA on floor regarding treating everyone fairly	85%
Satisfaction with RA on floor regarding promoting tolerance of others	83%

Overall:

- Students who report participation in programs and activities in the halls are more satisfied with their residence hall experience
- Students who participate in a living learning community are more satisfied with their residence hall experience
- The question that had the biggest positive movement from last year to this year was a question about satisfaction with the value of the meal plan
- When ranking the residence halls based on satisfaction by question, Rienow Hall was far and away the residence with the most #1 and #2 rankings. Slater and Daum Halls were also ranked highly by those living there.

Based on student feedback, the following initiatives are in the works, with most to be completed for the fall 2009 semester.

Guest meals – residents have commented that they wish they had guest passes for the Market Places when they have friends and family come into town for the weekend. University Housing listened and, beginning with the fall semester, students with 20 and 14 meal plans will receive guest meals in addition to their weekly meal allotment. More information about how the program will work will be given to those meal plan holders this fall.

Sustainability – University Housing, along with students, have successfully piloted an expanded recycling program in Quadrangle Hall. Recycling will be expanded to the entire west neighborhood in the fall of 2009. Composting of pre-consumer food waste has been occurring in Hillcrest Market Place for two years, and it has been expanded to the Burge Market Place this spring.

Staged hallway lighting – in the fall of 2008 Stanley and Rienow Halls tested having half the hallway lights shut off during the night hours. The feedback we received was that the residents felt that it not only saved energy, but that it helped reduce noise in the public areas after midnight. University Housing is currently studying the cost and timing of phasing the lighting in all buildings. Buildings will be phased over 3-4 years.

Tutoring will be expanded – this year was the first time that free tutoring was offered in the residence halls by housing student staff. We quickly learned that the number and scope of tutoring was not enough. A survey was distributed by the residence life staff to assess if there was a need for additional tutors. The answer was an overwhelming YES! In 2009-10, University Housing will double the number of tutoring hours offered. The tutoring will again be free to residence hall students.

Electronic meal plan changes – meal plan holders who wish to change their meal plan will no longer need to come to the office in Burge. Now they will be able to change their plans from their computer. In addition, students will have an additional two weeks to change their meal plans at the beginning of each semester.

Closing thoughts:

- While students are very satisfied with their safety and security in their residence hall and room, we don't want these results to lull students into a false sense of security. Residents should always lock their door, even when going down the hall or to the bathroom.
- The scores regarding satisfaction with the resident assistants were at a five year high. The RAs used a new approach for establishing and maintaining relationships with their residents, and this approach was received positively by the residents. In fact, this approach was recognized by the American College Personnel Association as an outstanding practice.

One thing that the resident satisfaction survey does not track is individual comments. If you responded to the survey or you have any comments about this information, you may e-mail your feedback to housing@uiowa.edu.