



PERCEPTIONS OF ON & OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

COMPARING STUDENT & ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES

Abstract

This paper seeks to discover both the university and student perspectives of on- and off-campus housing, with regards to the beliefs of the advantages and disadvantages related to each living option. To understand these perspectives, we surveyed university housing administrators and students from across the country. What we found was that there were three overarching themes to the responses, which included social atmosphere, the housing itself, overall experience, and expense.

Within this paper we will utilize these three themes to better understand both the university and student perspectives in relation to each living option. We hope that this paper will not only shine some light on the differences and similarities between these perspectives, but that it will also provide a basis for which university administrators and even landlords, might learn how to better optimize these living options for student tenants.

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Introduction

University housing offers a “home away from home” for millions of students every year. While it differs from university to university, this type of housing can offer students a place close to campus that is conducive for studying and relaxing. At the same time, off-campus living also provides a safe haven for many university students. For us at JumpOffCampus, we wanted to know exactly how students valued each option and what were the draws that eventually helped students make their housing decision. While the student perspective was of particular importance to us, we also wanted to consider the university perspective within our analysis. We wanted to know just how university administrators viewed each living option, and how these opinions differ.

With this analysis, we hope to inform university housing administrators about the preferences and perspectives of students and measure this against their own. Ultimately, this study should help optimize the university housing experience for students, but also to educate administrators.

We also believe that this study could prove to be valuable for landlords who currently rent, or are considering renting, to university students. Understanding student preferences about living options should educate landlords about meeting student demand.

In the following sections of this report we have broken down our analysis of on- vs. off-campus housing based on the most general themes we discovered amongst all responses. We grouped them into three overarching themes: social atmosphere, the housing itself, and the overall experience (e.g. student development and real-world experiences). Expense, while still a major theme within our findings, is a separate section of this analysis and the reasoning for this will be explained later on in this report. We will then evaluate each of these perspectives together to see how they compare and hopefully shed light on how university administrators and landlords might utilize this information.

Defining our Themes

Social Atmosphere, Housing, and Overall Experience

Social Atmosphere

We describe social atmosphere as it relates to student relationships and camaraderie. This includes proximity to a large concentration of friends, the ability to meet new people, and being a part of the larger campus community.

Housing

We have defined housing as the physical characteristics of the facilities. This not only includes the quality of the facilities, but also the security, the location, and amenities associated with these facilities.

Overall Experience

We have defined overall experience as it relates to the student maturity and freedom that is espoused by the two living options.

Expense

Expense will be defined within this report as both the basic expense of that living option (i.e. university housing room expense, and rent), as well as the associated costs that accompany each living option (e.g. gas, food, utilities).



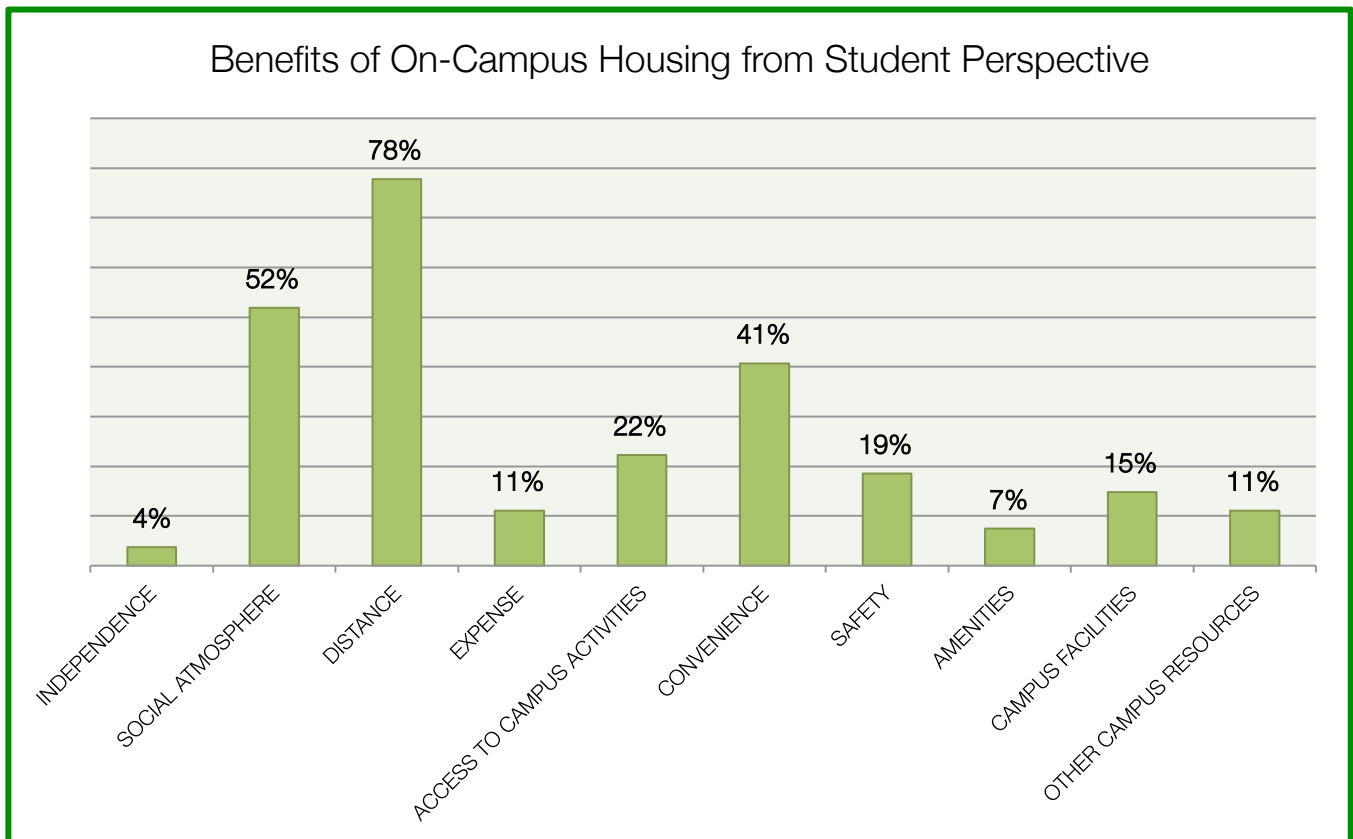
STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

On-Campus Housing from the Student Perspective

Social Atmosphere. University housing can provide students with a number of comforts that they would not normally find with other living options. In fact, one of the biggest draws for 52% of our student respondents was the social atmosphere that is afforded to them by on-campus housing. For students who enjoy going to on-campus sporting events, belonging to various organizations, and/or enjoy taking part in programming around campus, being close and “tapped in” to campus life is especially beneficial. This would then also explain why 22% of student respondents identified that connection and access to campus activities was a major benefit of living on-campus.

However, one of the disadvantages of living on-campus, according to students, is the limited access to social activities off-campus (11%). Unfortunately, some students explained that there “wasn’t much to do” on their campuses. This observation may come as a result of on-campus activities that either a) were not particularly interesting to these students, or b) the school did not provide enough activities for the students to participate, or c) factors such as campus location, enable students to feel like they “have nothing to do.”

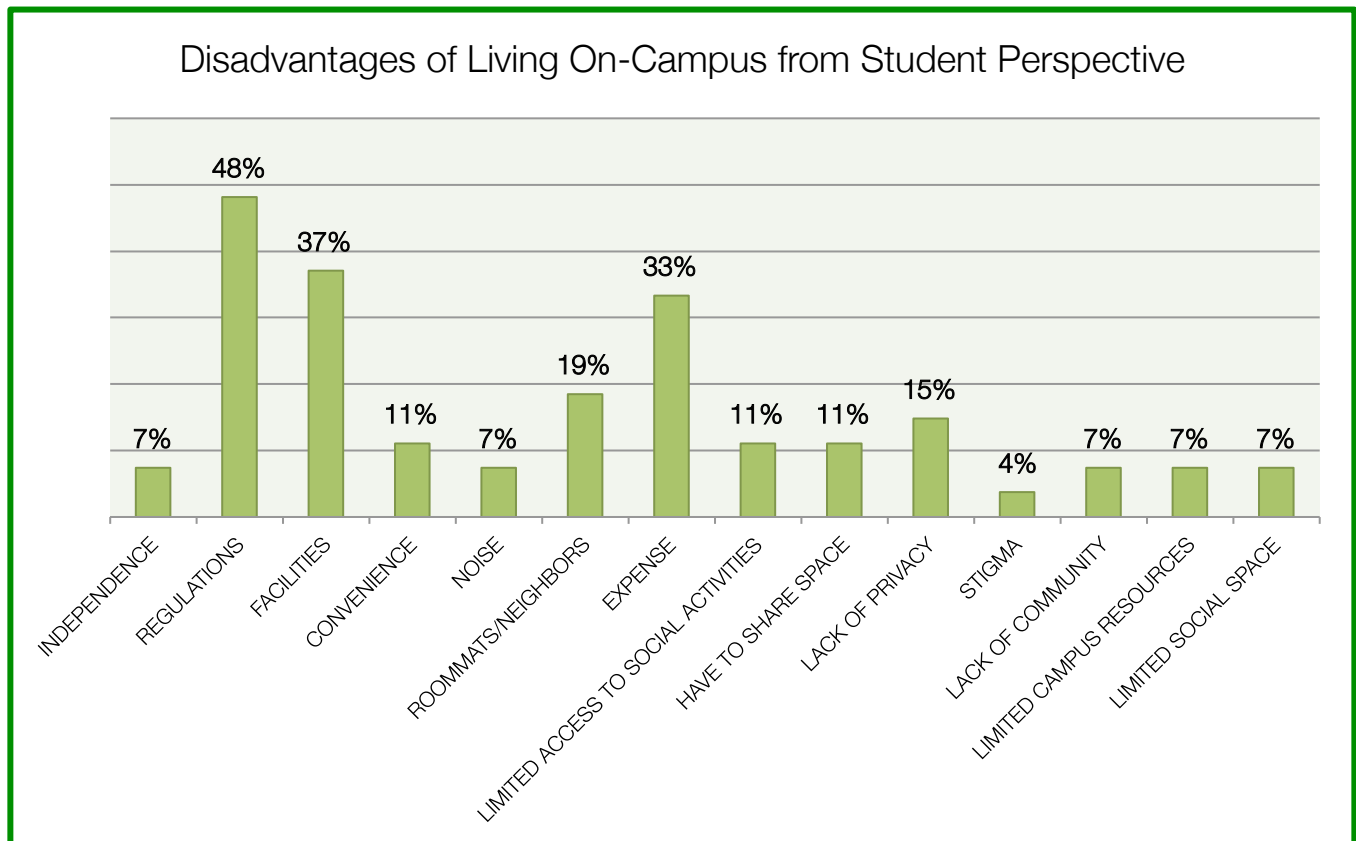
Another disadvantage students mentioned were issues with their roommates and neighbors (19%). Many students cited roommate conflicts and noisy neighbors as major issues they found within university housing. They often felt that other students did not respect shared space, nor did they respect shared property or the facilities.



Housing. One of the greatest draws for on-campus housing for students was proximity to campus (indicated on the graph as “Distance”). Of those we surveyed, 78% of individuals

explained that the proximity to campus, classes, and campus activities was a major benefit they observed. Of those we surveyed, approximately 48% explained that the convenience of being so close to campus and being on a meal plan, and 19% saw the safety were major benefits associated with on campus living.

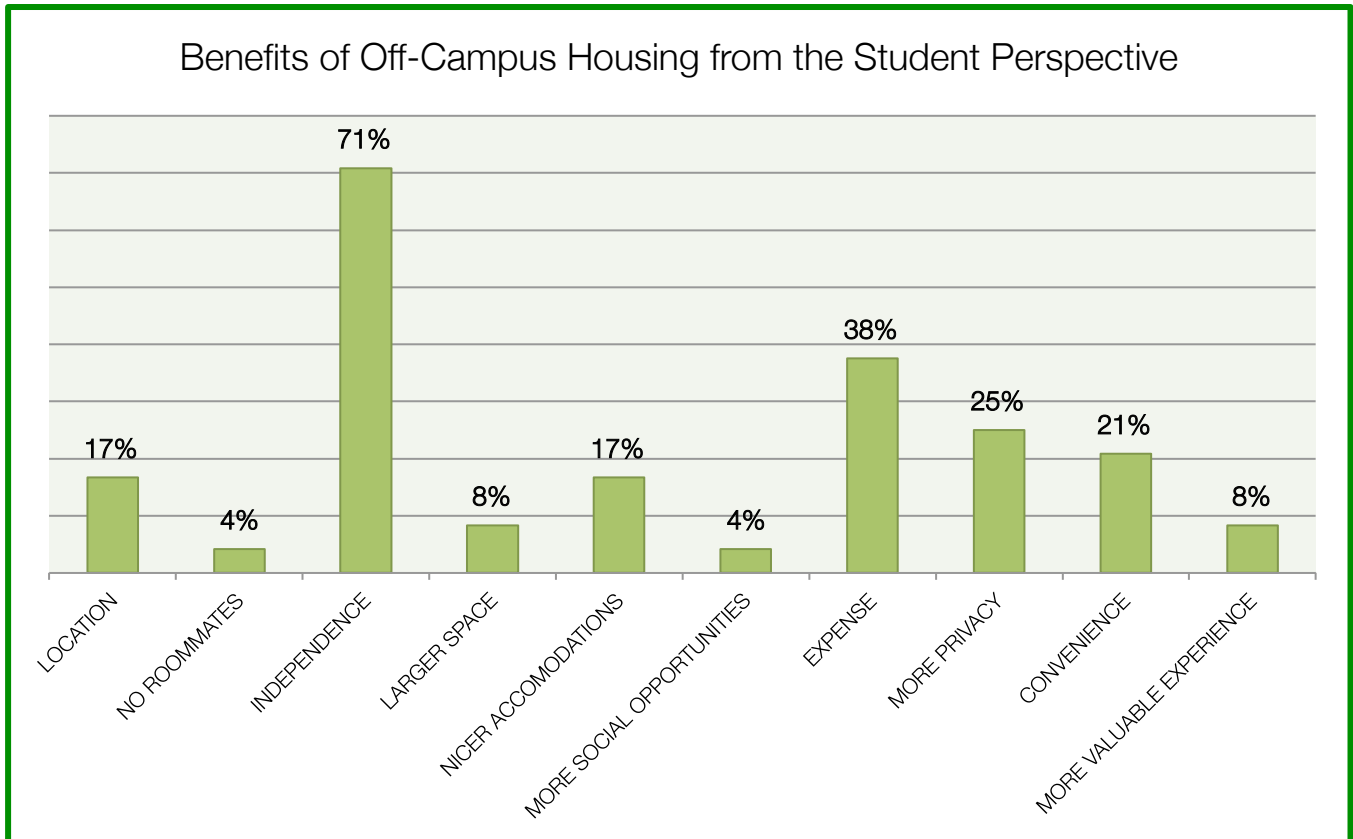
However, the facilities themselves appeared to be a major disadvantage for students (37%). Many students cited their frustration with the lack of personal space afforded to them by on-campus housing, and lack of privacy, as some of the major inconveniences associated with living on campus. In fact, according to a previous study we conducted, students were only given (on average) approximately 96 square feet to themselves and, in some cases, had to share their space with up to 3 other individuals.



Overall Experience. For students, one major part of their experience within university housing (other than the social atmosphere) was the lack of independence they perceived they had. According to our student respondents, university housing did not provide many opportunities for independence and freedom, as they cited regulation as one of the disadvantages of living in university housing (48%). The policies that students appeared to be particularly displeased with relate to guests and noise, and the policies surrounding roommate and roommate selection.

Off-Campus Housing from the Student Perspective

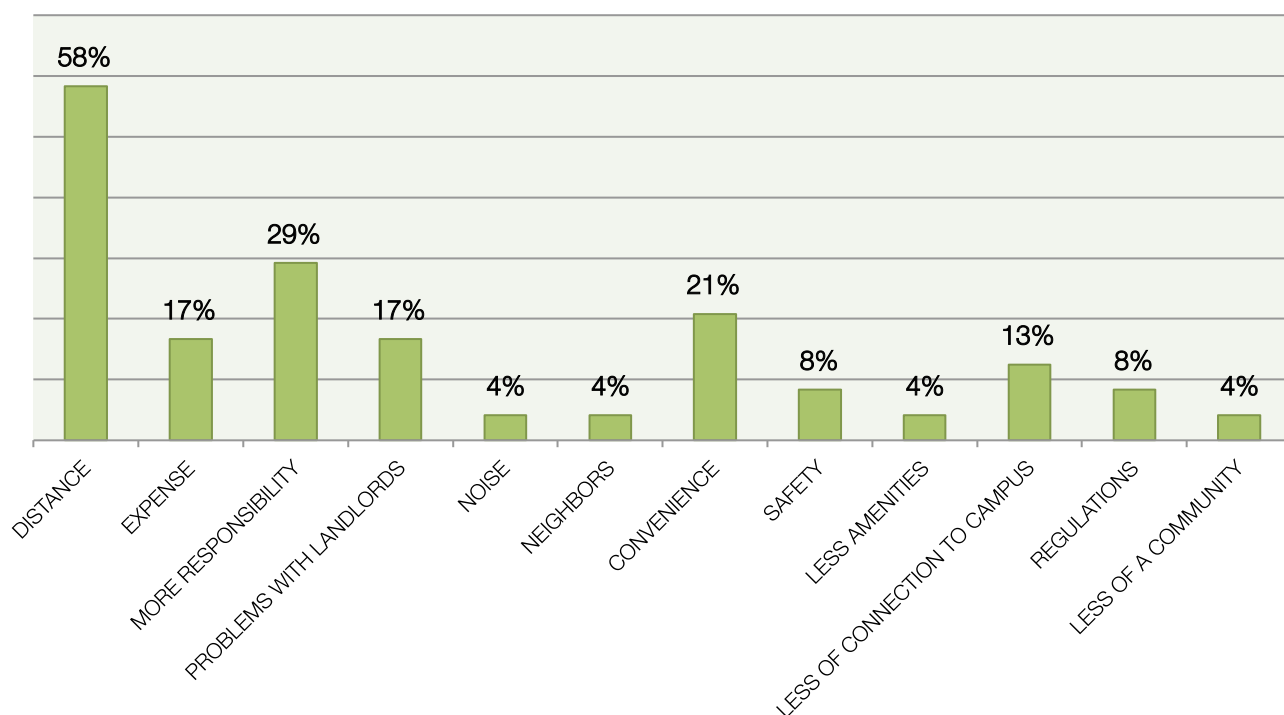
Social Atmosphere. While it we have previously noted that university housing provides a strong social atmosphere for students, off-campus housing seems to disconnect students with campus activities (13%). It seems that the distance from campus makes students feel disconnected from campus events and activities. However, on the other hand, off-campus housing provides students with the freedom to choose their own roommates, which seems to be a major draw for many students when making their housing decision (this falls under “Independence” within our graph).



Housing. For some students, off-campus housing provided them with a great deal of privacy (25%). This is because many off-campus options will not allow students to share a bedroom with another student, which can be a draw for many students.

In our findings we also discovered that students often found off-campus housing to be less convenient (21%), specifically with relation to commuting to and from campus. Students specifically identified that it is not only just the time it takes to commute, but also issues of inclement weather than are major considerations, in terms of commuter living. This would then also explain why 58% of respondents cited distance as a major disadvantage of off-campus housing.

Disadvantages of Off-Campus Housing from Student Perspective



Overall Experience. For students, off-campus housing affords them greater independence. Of those students we surveyed, 71% said that independence was a major benefit of living off-campus, as it gave them greater freedom to live as they pleased. Many also cited living off-campus as integral to their personal development, as they were able to experience how to interact with their own landlord, the neighbors in the community, and the responsibility of maintaining the property themselves.

Surprisingly, students also cited this greater responsibility as a major disadvantage of living off-campus (29%). This included taking care of maintenance issues themselves and dealing with other expenses associated with renting. Similarly, 17% of students cited problems with their landlords as a major issue related to off-campus living. This would directly relate to an increase in responsibility, as students would be held accountable for the relationship between themselves and their landlord.



UNIVERSITY PERSPECTIVE

On-Campus Housing from the University Perspective

Social Atmosphere. For university housing administrators, on-campus housing offers students more than just a community in which they can interact. It not only serves as a way for students to meet new individuals, but it also serves to immerse them into a diverse community.

The experience is like no other, says Gerry Kowalski, the Executive Director of University Housing at the University of Georgia. Kowalski explains that on-campus living really affords students the opportunity “[to develop] friendships and connections that may go beyond the undergraduate experience.”

Many university administrators also agree that on-campus living helps students stay tapped into the main campus “vein” of events, information, and activities. In this way, staying on-campus can help students feel like they are part of the university community and feel increasingly connected to the school and their fellow students.

Housing. For university housing administrators, on-campus housing offers students a greater number of amenities that they cannot find anywhere else. This includes the easy access to campus, their classes, and other educational resources, such as academic tutoring and Career Services. In these ways, campus housing provides students with greater academic support to help them excel.

Administrators also explain that university housing offers students greater safety than off-campus housing. Kevina Brown, Community Relations Coordinator for University Housing Services at San Jose State University, explains that the University offers students security escorts should they feel uncomfortable walking back from class, as well as safety stations posted throughout campus where students can make a phone call to police should they need. This helps students who make take night classes to feel that they will be safe travelling back to their dormitories from their classes.

Overall Experience. Of the university housing administrators with whom we spoke, all observed the convenience of on-campus living as being beneficial, citing the relative proximity to classrooms, and the convenience of the dining halls. For housing administrators, living on-campus is an opportunity to be more involved with organizations and university programming. They also cited the advantage of being closer to campus as a way for students to maintain interaction with faculty, which will help them do better in school.

According to Kent Sampson, Director of Student Life at Oklahoma State University, on-campus housing also provides students with a more structured living experience. For students, this means a framework for on-campus living, including the establishment of quiet hours, guest policies, and easy access to faculty and other resources. Overall, this affords students a better way to manage their roommate relations, and maintain academic excellence.

Off-Campus Housing from the University Perspective

Social Atmosphere. Many administrators maintain the perspective that living off-campus hinders the connection that students feel to their campus. According to Sampson, while university housing helps students stay “more easily tapped into the grapevine of information,” being off-campus removes students from campus; not just in location, but also within the community.

For Brown, off-campus housing can also foster issues with roommates. In Brown’s experience, students are regularly “left with the bill” when a roommate moves out. She explains that along with a greater financial burden, it also creates distractions for students from their studies when they are forced to find another roommate.

However, while it can create more roommate-related problems for students, Kowalski explains that off-campus housing can give students a chance to choose a group of friends with whom they would like to live. In this way, off-campus housing can reduce some of the stresses of living with strangers and the fear that there will be conflict.

Housing. According to university housing administrators, off-campus housing creates problems for students due to the distance from campus. Being so close to campus for class and other activities and resources is something that students cannot find in off-campus housing. Especially for Kevina Brown, moving off-campus creates more problems for students in that the San Jose public transportation system does not reach all parts of the city, which can increase the travel time to campus. Brown also explains that parking near the campus is limited, and not guaranteed. For students travelling to campus for class, this can cause many unexpected delays and absences.

Overall Experience. Most of the university housing administrators we interviewed agreed that off-campus housing is meant to provide students with more independence and more responsibility. According to Kowalski, off-campus housing helps students to learn about real life experiences (or the “life balance,” as Kowalski terms it) like balancing a checkbook, cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry, all while trying to manage schoolwork. In this way, off-campus housing can be beneficial to students and prepare them for the real world.

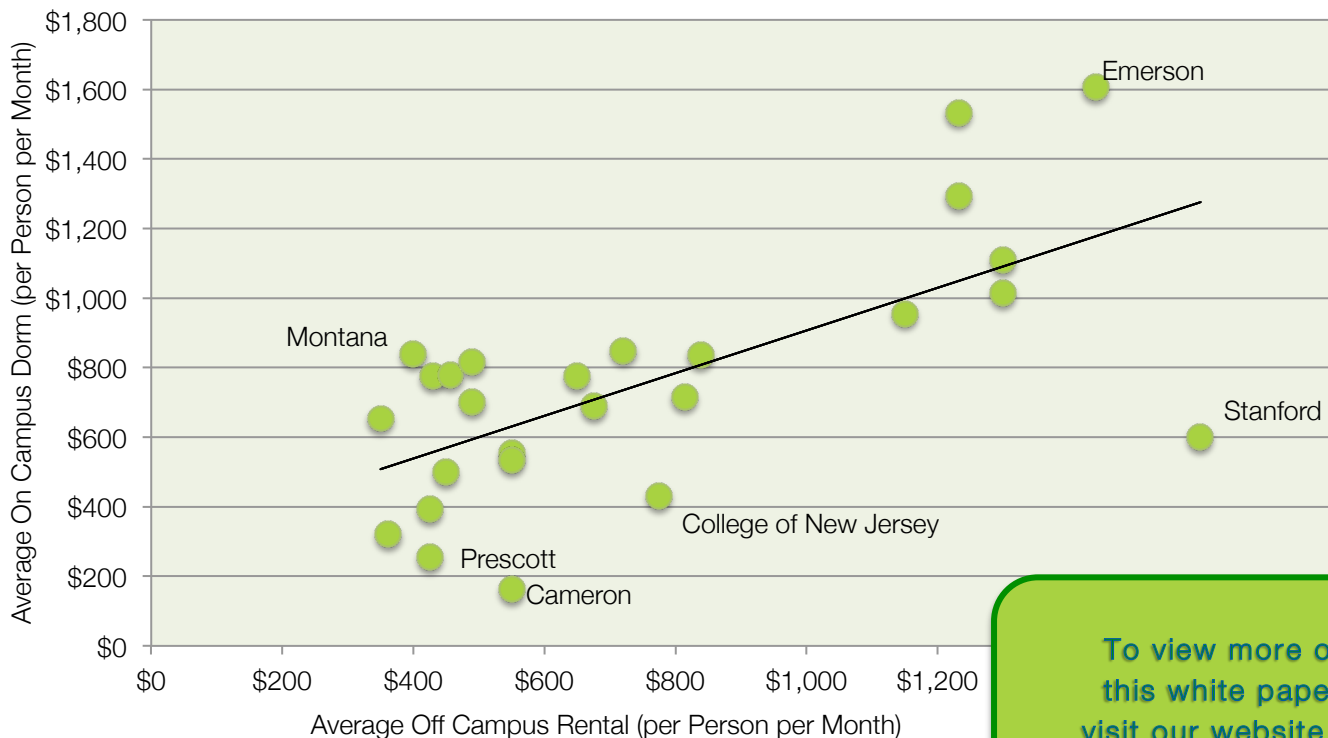
However, for housing administrators, with this independence comes great responsibility that students may not always be prepared for. For administrators like Kent Sampson, landlord-tenant relations are the biggest obstacle students face when moving off-campus. Kowalski agrees that, “It’s the first time they are signing a legal document and when they run into problems, it becomes difficult.” For many housing offices, educating their off-campus population on these types of issues is top priority so that they may better cope with the greater responsibility that is associated with off-campus living.

Expense of Living On- and Off-Campus

One of the major conundrums we encountered with this study was the issue of expense. Some students saw university housing as being more expensive, and yet others saw it as less expensive. These findings are a result of what an idea that we had previously researched, in which we found that on- and off-campus housing actually tended to be comparable. It would then explain that in areas where university housing was more expensive, students observed that it was so, and vice versa.

We also believe that this result occurred as a result of the “sticker shock” that is associated with on-campus living. In our previous research, administrators observed that often students and parents tend to see the semester price of on-campus living and immediately compare this to a monthly rate in an apartment. The problem with this is that they often do not take into account other expenses that come with off-campus living, such as utility expenses like heating, electricity, water, and Internet. Even if students were to determine the term rate for an off-campus house, they do not always consider the benefits that on-campus living affords them, and compare this to the benefits associated with their chosen off-campus living option.

Price of Living On vs Off Campus



To view more of
this white paper
visit our website at
JumpOffCampus.com

Comparison

Overall, we have found that student and university perspectives in relation to on- and off-campus housing are fairly comparable; both university administrators and students believed that on-campus living provided a thriving social atmosphere, and greater convenience than off-campus living. Both also agreed that off-campus living provided students with greater independence and a more “real life” living experience.

However, what our findings show is that, while some university housing administrators value a more structured living environment as a benefit to on-campus housing, many students identify this as a disadvantage. What this result may indicate is that universities may tend to err on the side of caution, as there may be social and legal ramifications associated with having totally unregulated housing. This may also stem from a desire to protect their students, that universities seek to provide safe, and structured, living options.

Conclusion

For college students, the biggest draws for living in university housing depend greatly on the proximity to campus, the social atmosphere, and the convenience that is associated with living right on campus. However, students see the strict regulations, the expense, the condition, and the amenities associated with the housing facilities as major disadvantages of living in university housing. This may explain why students value the independence and the freedom afforded to by off-campus housing as some of the greatest benefits.

On the other hand, university housing officials see expense, and structured living as a benefit that university housing provides. While housing officials agree that students are provided with greater independence, and privacy with off-campus living, they believe that on-campus living affords students a greater college experience, greater amenities, and a strong connectedness to their campus community that they may not find anywhere else.

In the end, while each university and student is different, it is important to consider the relative effects that understanding each perspective can have on the housing experience. What can be learned from this study is that the university perspective and the student perspective are mostly aligned, however, improvements could be made to optimize student living options. While not every person will have the same belief, understanding the varying perspectives may help to both improve and ease the entire housing experience for all.

About this Study

To conduct this study, we surveyed university students from across the United States using a thirty-nine-question survey meant to examine their opinions, observations, and perceptions of their own on- and off-campus experiences. The students we surveyed ranged in age from 20-29, and included both currently enrolled (undergraduate and graduate), as well as those who had graduated recently.

The housing administrators who participated in this study were interviewed by phone and email, and were asked similar questions relating to their opinions, observations, and practices, all based on their own experiences.

These administrators include:

Kevena Brown, Community Relations Coordinator for University Housing Services at San Jose State University

Janis Haney, Associate Director of University Student Housing at Texas Tech University

Gerry Kowalski, the Executive Director of University Housing at the University of Georgia

Sean Langley, Assistant Director for Off-Campus & Volunteer Outreach at UNC Charlotte

Vincent Roberts, Associate Director of Housing for Administrative Services at Florida State University

Kent Sampson, Director of Student Life at Oklahoma State University

Both surveys can be found in Appendix A.

Student Survey

Basic questions

1. Age?
2. What is your student status?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate Student
 - f. PhD Student
 - g. College Graduate
 - h. Other
3. What is your enrollment status?
 - a. Full-Time
 - b. Part-Time
 - c. Taking Classes
 - d. Not Enrolled
4. Where will you reside for the upcoming academic year?
 - a. At home with parent(s) or guardian(s)
 - b. In university housing
 - c. In off-campus housing (not with a parent or guardian)
 - d. Other
5. Have you previously resided in university housing?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. If so, when?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate School
 - f. Other
7. Have you previously resided off-campus?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. If so, when and where?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Graduate School
 - f. Other
9. If you previously resided in off-campus housing, how did you commute to campus (walking, biking, car, public transportation)?

- a. Under 5 minutes
 - b. 5-10 minutes
 - c. 11-20 minutes
 - d. 21-30 minutes
 - e. > 30 minutes
10. Do your friends currently reside in university housing?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Have your friends previously resided in university housing?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
12. Do your friends currently reside off-campus?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
13. Have your friends previously resided off-campus?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

On-Campus Housing

For the next section, please rate your responses to each question from 1 to 5 (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory).

1. How would you rate your overall experience in university housing on a scale of 1 to 5?
2. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the ability of the facilities to meet your expectations?
3. How would you rate the overall cleanliness of university housing facilities (this does not include your personal level of cleanliness).
4. How would you rate the ability of the facilities provided to fulfill your needs from 1 to 5.
5. How would you explain the condition of the facilities in terms of their upkeep (i.e. if they are older, were they kept well, were they new facilities)?
6. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with roommates and/or living community members (e.g. neighbors, hallmates) (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
7. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with the resources provided to you by on-campus housing (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
8. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with the amenities provided to you by on-campus housing (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
9. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with university housing staff in response to your needs, requests, and/or concerns in terms of your housing (1 =

- extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
10. What are the benefits of living on-campus?
 11. What are the disadvantages of living on-campus?
 12. What do you feel could be improved with regard to on-campus housing and all the associated processes and departments?

Off-Campus Housing

1. How would you rate your overall experience in off-campus housing on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
2. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the ability of the facilities to meet your expectations (1 = failed to meet my expectations, 2 = hardly met my expectations, 3 = neutral, 4 = met my expectations, and 5 exceeded my expectations)? Please explain your response.
3. How would you rate the overall cleanliness of the off-campus facilities in which you resided (this does not include your personal level of cleanliness) from 1 to 5 (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
4. How would you rate the ability of the facilities provided to fulfill your needs from 1 to 5 (1 = failed to meet my needs at all, 2 = met my needs minimally, 3 = neutral, 4 = met my needs, 5 = exceeded my needs)? Please explain your response?
5. How would you explain the condition of the facilities in terms of their upkeep (i.e. if they are older, were they kept well, were they new facilities)?
6. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with roommates and/or living community members (e.g. neighbors) (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
7. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with the amenities provided to you by off-campus housing (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
8. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 your experience with landlords, maintenance staff, etc. (1 = extremely unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 being neutral, 4 = satisfactory, and 5 extremely satisfactory)? Please explain your response.
9. What are the benefits of living off-campus?
10. What are the disadvantages of living off-campus?
11. What do you feel could be improved with regard to off-campus housing and all the associated processes and departments?

University Questions

1. How do you believe the on-campus housing facilities fulfill the needs of the students?
2. What amenities or programs do the on-campus residence halls offer students?
What are the benefits of on-campus housing?
3. How would you compare the cost of on-campus residence halls and off-campus housing in the area?
4. Is there a strong tendency for students to stay on campus?
5. How would you describe the campus vs. where your off-campus students live?
6. Overall, how would you rate the availability of off-campus housing?
7. Do you offer services or resources for students moving off-campus? If yes, what are these services or resources? If so, what is the satisfaction/use of such resources? If not, what do students do?
8. What are the pain points of your students moving off-campus?
9. What are the benefits of off-campus housing?

Who is JumpOffCampus?

JumpOffCampus is an online resource for students to help them find off-campus apartments, sublets, and roommates. By partnering with universities, we are able to offer this free online resource to their students, and by working with area landlords, we are able to create the listings that help make JumpOffCampus a success.

How Does JumpOffCampus Work?

JumpOffCampus offers services, not only to student users, but also to university administrators and landlords. It all starts with university partnerships, in which we provide a valuable resource to administrators and students for free. In fact, many of our university partners receive a revenue-share for partnering with us. It takes less than a day to launch a site for a new university partner, and once implemented, we can provide information such as where their off-campus population resides, as well as who are the local landlords.

To provide this kind of information, we work with the local landlords and property managers. For them, JumpOffCampus is a safe, easy, and reliable way to find student tenants, that is also cost-effective. For just a small monthly fee, JumpOffCampus offers landlords a way to increase traffic to their listings while maintaining their anonymity. Since our users are exclusively associated with specific universities in an area, landlords know they're communicating with qualified prospective tenants, such as undergraduate or graduate students, and faculty. In this way, they can be confident that their units are filled with tenants who are the right fit for their property.

For students, JumpOffCampus makes finding an apartment or sublet simple. Students can search by the name of their school to find listings in their area, and our intuitive apartment search allows them to focus on important factors like price point and desired move-in date. Another large factor in determining where students want to live is location, and we incorporate map-based functionality heavily into our interface to emphasize this so they can easily view listings closest to their campus and other points of interest. Students can also post their own sublet listings using JumpOffCampus, and by doing so, they can take advantage of the numerous free features available to landlords.

Most recently, we've added a feature that enables students to find roommates. To get started, each student takes our nineteen-question roommate survey, which we've developed based on university and student responses on what criteria make suitable roommate matches. From there, students can search other profiles of students who also attend their school. Our site even offers a compatibility score for each student profile so that students can see how suitable each prospective roommate might be, as well as a way to view their Facebook page (if they've chosen to link their profile to their Facebook).

To sign up for a demo of our site, visit us at www.jumpoffcampus.com, and be sure to check www.jumpoffcampus.com/universities to view our other White Papers and Resources for students and administrators.

