Welcome! This handout highlights the information that was shared during information sessions held in October.
Deciding where to live can be an overwhelming task that comes very early in the fall semester. The University does not have any authority to prohibit landlords and realtors from beginning the rental process early in fall semester, the University can provide guidance to students to navigate the housing search process. Over recent years, there has been an abundance of rental properties being built in the State College area. There is no shortage of housing off campus!! There is high demand for spaces downtown, directly across from the campus, but there is plenty of space in the surrounding area.

If you haven't decided which option (on or off campus) is right for you, here are some factors to consider:

1. **BUDGET**

   comparing on campus to off campus is similar to comparing apples to oranges; it’s not always easy to equate the total cost up front!

   **On campus:** room and board charges are processed through the student’s LionPATH account at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. No additional fees are added. You are only paying for 9 months during academic year that you will be at campus. If you stay at UP during summer, you would incur additional room and board charges. If the HFS Contract is cancelled, rates would be pro-rated.
**Off campus:** you will sign a 12-month lease (that may be for only 11/11.5 months) which you pay on a monthly basis. Rent will not include food services, utilities, fees. There may be hidden fees, be sure to read the lease. You will be paying for summer months that you may not be living at UP. The downtown market will generally have a higher cost, as well as spaces with additional amenities. The further you live from campus, the rent generally is lower (and sometimes offer better amenities too!). For meals, it is hard to predict what your overall yearly cost will be, as your food expenses may vary depending upon if you cook all of your meals or you eat out a lot.

2. **FLEXIBILITY**

   **On campus:** the University offers flexibility if you decide to not attend Penn State or plan to study abroad/internship, or if you withdrawal during the semester. The HFS Contract will be cancelled with no penalty in those circumstances.

   **Off campus:** leases are not flexible to cancel, the landlord will not consider your student status as a reason to cancel. You may not be able to change your space either.

3. **MEALS**

   **On campus:** you have the convenience of the meal plan and not having to worry about cooking. Many housing options offer access to a kitchen, so if you want to cook some meals, you would have the ability to do that. The meal plan may be viewed as expensive, but you are paying for the convenience of having a variety of food prepared for you. No food shopping is required.

   **Off campus:** for those students who love to cook their own meals, off-campus apartments fit that need. You’ll want to factor in the time involved to grocery shop and prepare meals. Your cost may increase if you purchase meals at restaurants.

4. **AMENITIES**

   **On campus:** the University does not offer housing options with luxury amenities. Some of the renovated spaces feature a common kitchen, access to private bathrooms, climate-controlled environment.

   **Off campus:** the off-campus housing market offers a wide-range of amenities: from the simple apartment, to the more luxurious spaces that include pools, tanning beds, sport complexes, you can find a space that offers what you seek. Be mindful of what you are paying for – will you be in the apartment during the months that a pool can be used? Figure out what amenities you require within your budget.
5. SUPPORT

**On campus:** while living on campus, you have the entire University support system available to support you: Residence Life RAs and coordinators, counselors, Housekeeping, maintenance, Police Services, and tons of other staff. The University will work with you on any situation that may arise. If there is a roommate issue, staff will help to resolve the issue.

**Off campus:** living off campus means that some of these support networks are not there, but this may provide a student with more freedom and responsibility. The student can still receive support from the University by seeking out those resources. Landlords will not address roommate issues.

6. CONVENIENCE

**On campus:** not having a car makes on-campus housing super convenient – being able to roll out of bed and head to class without worrying about traffic and parking is something many students enjoy. The CATAbus system is available for students who need to go further off campus for shopping, entertainment, etc. Students who are on campus late night can take advantage of the Safe Walk service.

**Off campus:** depending upon the location of the apartment will determine what is convenient. Many complexes offer parking near the apartment, making it convenient for those who require a car. Many leases also include the CATAbus pass, so students have a way to travel to campus without worrying about parking/car. Be sure to bring a snow shovel if you have a car! Even if your complex takes care of snow removal, you’ll want to have one if your car gets plowed in.

7. RESPONSIBILITY

**On campus:** students do not have to worry about paying monthly bills, cleaning the bathroom, or worrying about maintenance issues. Students who are 21 or older are not able to consume alcohol in University housing.

**Off campus:** living off campus certainly offers the student more responsibility – paying bills on time, cleaning, taking care of trash, handling roommate issues.
Living on campus is a great option for students!
At University Park, there is a first-year residency requirement. Of the approximate 14,300 spaces available, about 8000 spaces are reserved for freshman. The remaining spaces are available for upper-class students.
Eligibility guidelines to participate in the on-campus housing lottery process:

• Must be currently living on campus at University Park –OR–
• Be a student enrolled at a Commonwealth Campus who is considering a Change of Campus to University Park (refer to http://orientation.psu.edu/campus-landing for additional information about that process)

Students who are NOT eligible to participate in the on-campus housing lottery process are those who currently live off campus at University Park. It is a myth that once a student lives off campus, that they are not able to return to on-campus housing. The student cannot participate in the housing lottery, but can add their name to a Waitlist in eLiving beginning Noon December 1. In February, once all students in the process have been invited and selected a housing option, invitations will be sent to those on the Waitlist. Then in March, invitations will be sent every Monday afternoon. There is no guarantee of what housing option will be available, but students will be able to live on campus if they desire.
Upper-class students have many housing options, compared to options available for first-year students:

- **Traditional Residence Halls** – double or single occupancy room. Buildings located in West, South (McElwain, Simmons, Atherton), and Pollock (Beaver, Hiester, Shulze).
- **Renovated Residence Halls** – double occupancy room. Buildings located in South (Chace, Hibbs, and Stephens. There are also some floors available in other South renovated buildings).
- **Supplemental Housing** – houses 5-8 students. Located in traditional residence halls in South (McElwain, Simmons), West (very limited, mostly male spaces), and Pollock (Beaver, Hiester, Shulze).
- **Nittany Apartments** – 4-person bedroom. Mostly 2-bedroom/4-person spaces, but a few 4-bedroom/4-person apartments available.
- **White Course Apartments** – 4-bedroom/4-person apartments.
- **Eastview Terrace** – single room w/private bathroom.
- **Nittany Hall Suites** – 2-bedroom/4-person suite with shared bathroom.
- **North Hall Suites** – 2-bedroom/4-person suite with shared bathroom.
Room and Board Rates
Room and board charges are applied to the student’s LionPATH account at the beginning of fall and spring semester. Rates listed are per-person/per-semester.

Rates will be approved in February by the Board of Trustees and will be posted at www.hfs.psu.edu/rates once available.

We recommend reviewing the current year rates at www.hfs.psu.edu/rates and estimating a 3-5% increase. It is not known what the increase amount will be, but it’s best to estimate high and be prepared.

Room rates are based on the housing option selected. It’s important to understand the varying rates – selecting Eastview Terrace (single room w/private bathroom), you are receiving a premium housing space, which comes with the highest room rate.

Take into consideration what your Financial Aid package will cover; if the amount you are receiving only covers the cost of a double room, traditional residence hall, and you select a suite, you may be responsible for paying the cost difference out of pocket.
The housing process is managed through the eLiving system.

All communication is sent to the student’s Penn State email account, as it’s managed through eLiving. The University does not send emails to parents or families.

NEW feature – students can sign up for text message notifications for when an invitation or contract offer is made! The student can sign up in eLiving under Account Settings. The cell phone number used is the student’s number indicated in LionPATH.

We know that parents and families play an integral role in a student’s academic plan, so to ensure that everyone is aware of what is happening, information is posted through our social media accounts. This way, you know what’s happening/when, and you can ask your student!

• Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PennStateOnCampusLivingUP/
• Twitter: https://twitter.com/housingPSU
• Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/pennstatehousing/
The housing lottery process consists of 5 steps:

1. Request Housing
2. Invitations
3. Select Housing Options
4. Indicate Roommate
5. Create & Accept HFS Contract
#1 REQUEST HOUSING

Students can Request Housing between Noon October 1 – Noon October 31, or Noon December 1 – Noon January 31

Requesting Housing does NOT obligate a student to living on campus. A student can either cancel the Request Housing or not take action when an invitation or offer is made.

A date that a student Requests Housing is not referenced during a lottery – meaning, a student who Requests Housing October 1 has no greater or less chance of receiving an invitation early in the process than a student who Requests Housing October 31.
To Request Housing, log in to eLiving. Under “HFS Contracts”, select “Request Housing. Click the blue “Request Now” button. A message will appear that you successfully requested housing.
#2 INVITATIONS

Invitations are sent between Noon – 5:00pm on Mondays and Thursdays in November and February

- Thursday November 1: reserved for students returning to Special Living Options (offers for that space only, they do not see other housing options)
- Monday February 4: reserved for students living in Sorority Chapter Housing (offers for that space only, they do not see other housing options).

The number of students invited will depend upon the total number of requests received; the number will be divided by the days available to help manage the influx of students in the system and not create an overload. If students who Request Housing in October are not invited in February, they will receive an invitation in February.
#2 INVITATIONS
Sent between Noon – 5:00 pm

The invitation will include the Deadline to Complete (expiration date).
The Deadline to Complete means that the student must select a housing option, add a roommate (if applicable), and then create AND accept the Housing and Food Service (HFS) Contract BEFORE the expiration date.

- Invitations sent on Mondays, will expire at Noon Thursday
- Invitations sent on Thursday, will expire at Noon Monday

MOST IMPORTANT TO KNOW::: if the student who receives the invitation adds a roommate, the roommate will have the SAME deadline to complete the process! So if Suzy Student receives an invitation on Monday, but does not take action until Thursday – if she adds Jane Student as a roommate, Jane Student will receive the offer with the same deadline to complete – Noon Thursday. This leaves little time for Jane Student to complete the steps. We are advising students to take action soon after receiving the invitation if they are going to add a roommate, so that the roommate has adequate time.
#3 SELECT HOUSING OPTION

When the student receives an invitation, the student will be able to view housing options. While all options will be displayed, once an option has been filled, it will no longer be selectable (you can still see it, so you are aware that it’s not missing!). The system will also show the number of spaces remaining as well as how many roommates can be added.
#3 SELECT HOUSING OPTIONS
(this is a screen shot of a TEST invitation, and not an actual representation of what you view)

1. Rates: click link to view room and board rates
2. Deadline To Complete (expiration date): clearly identifies when the process has to be completed by both the student invited and any added roommates
3. Spaces Remaining: how many bed spaces are available in the housing options, space is by student’s gender. Once the number hits 0, the housing option will no longer be available to select. Displaying this number helps students be aware if a space is popular, that they may need to take quick action to select an option.
4. Roommates: the number of a roommates permitted to be added for the housing option. (additional info about roommates will be shown on an upcoming slide)
5. Continue: click button to select the housing option

In this example, you’ll notice that Nittany Apartments has 0 spaces remaining, so is no longer available to select.
When a student receives an invitation, it is feasible that some housing options will not be available, as other students have selected the option and filled all available space. If a student does not see an option that they want, but they really want to live on campus, the student can select another option that they would be satisfied with, and then add their name to an “internal” Waitlist that will open Noon March 1. There will be a Waitlist for each housing option and several Special Living Options.

Waitlists will be available ONLY to students who have accepted a HFS Contract. The student can add their name to only ONE Waitlist. When a vacancy in that housing option becomes available, a student on the Waitlist will be reassigned. Reassignment is first-come, first-served, so we go in date order of when a student has added name to Waitlist to process the reassignment. While the University is not able to guarantee that a student will be reassigned, many students are reassigned off of the Waitlist throughout the spring semester and summer, before fall semester has begun.
The student receiving an invitation may add a roommate, but it is NOT required
• The number of roommates that can be added is dependent upon the housing option selected (for example, for single room spaces, no roommates can be added. For suites/apartments, 1-3 roommates can be added).
• Added roommate must be eligible
  • Roommate must have Requested Housing
  • Roommate cannot have accepted a HFS Contract already
• Roommates can be any gender. The University supports Open Housing for upper-class students, and is available in all housing options. However, the University will not place mixed genders together without it being a direct request of the students.
• Once a roommate is added, a HFS Contract offer will be generated for both the student invited and added roommates.
• Reminder, all students must complete the entire process by the Deadline to Complete (expiration date)!!
• Many students do not add a roommate! That is acceptable – the University will process a random roommate assignment. All beds will be filled. If a student invites only 2 roommates for a 4-person space, the other space will be filled with a random roommate. It’s not an option to “buy out” the space.
Example of where a student can add a roommate (not required)
In this example, 2 of the 3 students added were eligible to receive the contract offer. The 3rd one was not eligible. The student can decide to either proceed with just the 2 roommates, or add a different 3rd roommate.

Click “Continue”
#5 HFS Contract
The system will generate a Housing and Food Service (HFS) Contract offer for each student. Each student has the same Deadline to Complete (expiration date).

The HFS Contract is a legally-binding contract; once accepted, the contract will NOT be cancelled if the student is enrolled at Penn State University Park. The contract will not be cancelled for a student to move into a frat house. Do not sign a lease after accepting the HFS Contract, you will then have 2 rents to pay – the University is not required to cancel the HFS Contract because you accepted a lease!
To generate the HFS Contract, review the housing option choice/roommates. The student is not yet obligated to the HFS Contract – click “Create Contract” to continue.
The HFS Contract will appear. The student will need to review the Terms, Conditions, and Regulations (TCRs). You can view the TCRs at https://housing.psu.edu/housing-and-food-service-contract-terms-conditions-and-regulations

To accept the HFS Contract, the student must

1. check-mark that they have read & agreed to the TCRs
2. Electronically type their name
3. Click the green Accept Contract

Until you do all 3 steps, you are not obligated to the HFS Contract.

After clicking Accept Contract....
...you will see the “Contract Successfully Accepted” message. You are all set!! Your HFS Contract has been completed.
When a student invites a roommate, the roommate will receive an HFS Contract offer (by email and text message notification, if they signed up)

The HFS Contract offer will be available in the Shopping Cart OR under the Summary Page.

The roommate must accept the HFS Contract by the Deadline to Complete (expiration date).
ROOM ASSIGNMENT

So, the student has a HFS Contract! Each contract will be either a Self-Select or a Preference contract.

Preference: similar to what a first-year student accepted – the student indicates preferences for housing area, building, roommate, meal plan. The University will process the room assignment. Students have until Noon April 12 to update preferences. This means that a student can update/change a roommate preference until then.

Self-Select: the contract will provide the student a date/time to return to eLiving to self-select a room. This will occur March/April, once room and board rates have been approved. During this process, a student can select a space based on individual preference. For students who wish to live together, the students will all need to select the same space.

Room assignments are posted in eLiving Noon Monday July 22. the Direct Room Switch will also be available, so students can swap assignments to either get into a building that is wanted, or to live with a particular roommate. (correction: the correct posting date is July 22, NOT July 15. sorry for any confusion!)
WE ARE excited to have students #LiveTheTradition with Penn State Housing next year!

Questions?? Contact:
Assignment Office
• assignmentoffice@psu.edu
• 814-865-7501
• www.housing.psu.edu
• www.housing.psu.edu/current-students

Social Media
• Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PennStateOnCampusLivingUP/
• Twitter: https://twitter.com/housingPSU
• Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/pennstatehousing/
Living Off Campus
BUDGET

Before the Search: Set Parameters

- Budget
- Location
- Amenities
- Type of lease
“Maybe sharing an apartment isn’t a good idea.”
Research!
• Better Business Bureau
• YELP reviews
• County legal filings
  (UJS Portal)
• Previous tenants
• View unit
Reviewing a lease

• What does the landlord promise?
  • Unit ready in time?
  • Any flexibility?
• Are there terms that are unfair or impossible to perform?
  • Heat in winter
  • Entry without notice
  • Administrative fees
  • Fines for ordinance violations
• Are there hidden costs?
  • Redecorating fee
  • Carpet cleaning
  • Amenity fee
  • Application fee
• Are you agreeing to pay your rent? Or everyone’s rent?
  • Joint and several liability
  • Individual rent responsibility
  • Individual lease
Renter’s Insurance: Personal property + liability!
RESOURCES
Off-Campus Student Support

- Online classifieds
  - Housing
  - Roommates
  - Furniture
- Helpful Resources
  - CAPS Chat
  - Housing search assistance
  - Dispute resolution assistance
- Programming
  - Off-Campus Student Union
  - Neighborhood Ambassadors
  - LION Bash
  - Housing fairs
Student Legal Services

- Free
- Confidential
- Licensed attorneys
- Convenient location
- Appointment and drop-in hours
- Refer, Consult, Represent
Parents and families
- Financial
- Informational
Thank You!
Assignment Office / Housing
www.housing.psu.edu
814-865-7501 | AssignmentOffice@psu.edu

Off-Campus Student Support
www.studentaffairs.psu.edu/offcampus
814-865-2346

Student Legal Services
www.studentaffairs.psu.edu/legalservices
814-867-4388