

INTRODUCTION

The Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Residential Life was constituted in August 2003 by Rev. Mark L. Poorman, C.S.C., Vice President for Student Affairs. The University's strategic plan includes several goals which relate specifically to residential life, an essential feature of the Notre Dame experience. Father Poorman asked the Ad Hoc Committee to explore a broad range of issues related to residential life and advise him on how best to achieve these strategic goals.

The Committee was comprised of students, faculty members, administrators, and residence hall rectors. Those who served as part of the Committee are:

Ms. Ann Firth, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Co-Chair
Mr. William Kirk, Associate Vice President for Residence Life, Co-Chair
Ms. Brin Anderson, Student (Fall 2004)
Mr. Dominic Angiollo, Assistant Rector (Fall 2004)
Mr. David Baron, Student Government (Fall 2004)
Rev. John Conley, C.S.C., Rector
Dr. Lawrence Cunningham, Professor, Theology
Ms. Demetrius Hall, Junior Student (2003-04)
Mr. Jeremy Lao, Student Government (2003-04)
Sr. Mary Ann Mueninghoff, OP, Rector
Mr. Bernard Muir, Deputy Director of Athletics
Mr. Gerry Olinger, Assistant Rector (2003-04)
Ms. Keri Oxley, Senior Student (2003-2004)
Mr. Jeffrey Shoup, Director, Residence Life and Housing
Ms. Barbara Szweda, Associate Professional Specialist, Law School

The Committee met on a regular basis over the course of three semesters. It also convened eleven focus groups so that it might hear perspectives on the future of residential life from a wide range of campus constituencies. Members of the Committee met with

undergraduate students, Student Government, resident assistants, graduate students, faculty, residence hall rectors, residence hall assistant rectors, administrators, parents, and alumni.

With assistance from the Office of Institutional Research, the Committee formulated and administered an Undergraduate Student Survey on Residential Life to approximately 1,200 students and its Graduate Student Survey to 750 students. An executive summary of the survey results can be found in the Appendix to this report.

RESIDENTIAL LIFE AT NOTRE DAME: CONTEXT

Residential life is perhaps the most distinctive feature of the undergraduate experience at Notre Dame, and it has a rich and storied history. When Father Edward Sorin founded Notre Dame in 1842, students lived with priests and brothers of the Congregation of Holy Cross in the same building in which they attended classes. Since those early days, the charism of Holy Cross, which calls members to live out the Gospels as “educators in faith,” has remained at the heart of the University’s residential mission.

Integral to Notre Dame’s self-understanding as a Catholic university is the notion that the social, intellectual, personal, and spiritual development of its students must be rooted in community. The University seeks to do more than simply provide students with on-campus housing or establish structures equivalent to fraternity and sorority houses. Rather, residential life at Notre Dame seeks to encourage students to realize their full potential as individuals and equip them as citizens and leaders to take their places in society and the Church.

As the University looks to the future, the Committee underscores the importance of the following principles as foundational to residential life at Notre Dame:

1) Fostering Christian Community

The great strength of Notre Dame’s residential tradition flows from its explicit commitment to offering students the opportunity to live in Christian community. In the residence halls, generations of

students have learned to live alongside peers from diverse backgrounds, with different intellectual interests and distinct personalities, in the context of a community of scholars and believers. As they experience and embrace these differences, students deepen their understanding of what it means to be part of the human family and come to see one another as unique creations of a loving God. Sharing the joys and sorrows of daily life, friendships are nurtured which mature through the years to become lifelong sources of support and encouragement.

Notre Dame's ability to provide students with this unique experience of residential life rests in large measure on the extraordinary leadership and dedication of the men and women who serve as rectors. Together with their assistant rectors and resident assistants, rectors exercise a distinct Christian ministry whose aim is to foster in students "the development . . . of those disciplined habits of mind, body and spirit which characterize educated, skilled and free human beings." (University's Mission Statement). As discussed later in this report, recruitment of rectors who will carry this ministry forward is an important challenge for the future.

2) Facilitating the Journey of Faith

The strong sense of community at the heart of residential life at Notre Dame reaches perhaps its most explicit expression in the celebration of hall liturgies each Sunday. These celebrations testify to the importance of the religious quest at the University. Students not only participate in the liturgies but help to plan and shape them, serving as liturgical commissioners, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and musicians.

Students are encouraged to nurture their relationship with God in other ways as well, through personal and communal prayer, biblical study, and faith-sharing groups. While the rectors serve as the

spiritual leaders of the halls, Campus Ministry provides critical support, offering both Catholics and those from other faith traditions opportunities for spiritual development.

The residence halls provide a setting in which all students, whatever their religious background, can reflect upon their moral and intellectual commitments from the perspective of faith. How will they utilize the talents and resources they have been given? How can they live out the Gospel mandates, to work for peace, to bring about justice? Students are encouraged to explore these and other questions in the context of a community dedicated to faith and scholarship.

3) Living Out the Call to Service

While living in Christian community offers opportunities to forge strong links within each hall, this is not sufficient; we are called as believers to look beyond our own needs, turning our gifts to the service of others. Every residence hall is involved in community service and encourages residents to participate in the many outreach programs sponsored by the Center for Social Concerns. In this way, service becomes part of the fabric of communal life, as evidenced by an extraordinarily large number of students who volunteer in various programs during their undergraduate years at Notre Dame and the equally impressive number who give a year or more of service upon graduation. We must continue our efforts to engage all students in service and to offer opportunities, both formal and informal, for reflection on the meaning of Christ's call.

4) Creating a Welcoming Environment

Christian community is never an accomplished fact; it is always a work in progress. Two elements of community, in particular, require constant attention. The first is the ongoing work of creating an atmosphere in which the unique gifts of each individual are respected and valued, allowing

all to flourish. Closely aligned to an atmosphere of respect is the necessity to foster and embrace diversity—racial, ethnic, and social.

As Notre Dame fulfills its desire to diversify its student population, appreciation for diversity cannot be satisfied with minimal courtesy or “tolerance”; it must be fostered at a deeper level of friendship and mutual exchange. The initiatives of the Offices of Multicultural Student Programs and Services (MSPS) and International Student Services and Activities (ISSA) are designed to both support under-represented and international students and to foster greater understanding among all students. Only in an atmosphere of respect and welcome can Christian community flourish. Each member must participate in creating such an environment at Notre Dame, and we urge the University to redouble its efforts in this regard.

5) Encouraging Healthy Relationships

Community life at Notre Dame cannot only be situated in the individual residence hall as an isolated unit; our residential philosophy must also envision and encourage bonds between the various halls. Such cooperation develops a greater sense of cohesiveness in the student body as a whole, while still allowing for the specific “culture” and traditions of each residence hall. Intramural sports, social events, social service projects, and other shared programs provide the structure for this interaction. These connections between the halls are especially important given that the halls are single-sex.

At Notre Dame, as on any campus, the college years are critical for students’ understanding of sexuality and relationships. To support student development in this regard, we must encourage and facilitate dialogue about these issues. In addition, the University must

continue to address those factors which interfere with the development of healthy relationships, such as alcohol abuse, gender stereotypes, and sexual assault.

6) Integrating Academics and Student Life

Notre Dame's commitment to residential living is intimately tied to the University's primary goal of intellectual formation. At a minimum, the halls must be settings where study and collaborative learning can occur. There students should encounter lively discussion and dialogue, engaging in the "clash of mind with mind" (Cardinal Newman). Faculty ought to be frequent and welcome visitors, coming into the halls to give talks or to lead informal discussions with students. "Intellectual life should be as vital in the residence hall as in the classroom, and questions of faith, belief, and community should be welcome everywhere, including the classroom." (Ad Hoc Committee on Academics and Student Life). Understood in this way, the residence halls, while home to students, are extensions of the academic enterprise, not merely recreational or social centers.

7) Developing Student Leadership

Notre Dame is committed to being a premier training ground for intellectual, moral, and spiritual leaders. In addition to leadership through academic accomplishment, students can find many avenues for leadership development in the student life arena. Through many of the 300 student clubs and organizations administered by the Office of Student Activities, students work alongside fellow students and faculty advisors to explore an interest or advance a cause. As resident assistants and peer educators, students learn important helping skills. Through involvement in hall and Student Government, students shape University policy and give voice to student needs and concerns. Trained to serve as catechists in local parishes and to plan liturgies and retreats, students participate in creating

vibrant faith communities. With assistance from The Career Center, students can take advantage of internship opportunities and gain invaluable experience. We must commit to continued growth in these and other areas, collaborating closely where possible with academic units of the University, as we seek to train future leaders equipped with knowledge and compassion to face the critical questions of the day.

8) Meeting Student Health and Safety Needs

Rectors and their staffs play an important role in connecting students with the wide array of services the University offers. They are often the first point of contact when students face serious academic, health, or family difficulties, and they are well-equipped to serve as referral sources and advocates for their residents.

Providing students with ready access to excellent, on-campus health care has been a priority for the University because of its highly residential nature. Compared to the limited services offered at most other colleges and universities, a Health Center which is open to students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during the academic year is extraordinary.

With eleven full-time psychologists, an eating disorder specialist, and a part-time psychiatrist on staff, the Counseling Center supports the psychological and emotional well-being of students. Students seek assistance with a wide variety of issues, from homesickness and time management difficulties to eating disorders and depression. Those experiencing difficulties with alcohol or other drugs can receive education and support through the Office of Alcohol and Drug Education. With greater numbers utilizing counseling and psychological services than ever before, sufficient resources must be allocated to meet student needs.

Finally, through the efforts of Notre Dame Security/Police, the safety of the campus environs and residence halls is maintained. Dedicated to serving the University community, NDSP provides assistance in a wide variety of situations, contributing substantially to the creation of an environment where students can flourish.

It is within the framework of these guiding principles that the Committee has formulated recommendation in four areas: I) Residential Facilities; II) Campus Facilities; III) Residential Life Policies; and IV) Residence Hall Staffing.

RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

In formulating its strategic plan, *Notre Dame 2010: Fulfilling the Promise*, the Office of Student Affairs identified several strategic goals relating to the University's residential facilities:

- 1) Alleviate overcrowding in existing undergraduate residence halls;
- 2) Construct four new undergraduate residential facilities;
- 3) Undertake extensive renovations of existing halls; and,
- 4) Construct new apartments for married students, replacing University Village.

Given these specific strategic goals, the Committee offers the following recommendations.

I. UNDERGRADUATE FACILITIES

Recommendation 1. Design new residence facilities which will promote the University's mission and goals with regard to residential life.

At its core, residential life flourishes at Notre Dame because students experience the halls as

communities of faith. The importance of building Christian community through residential life, and the corresponding need for building design consistent with this mission, emerged as a recurring theme over the course of the Committee's work.

The Committee recommends that all new residence halls be designed such that they will have:

- * a common entrance and lobby which welcome residents and guests;
- * a hall capacity not to exceed 250 students, with 180 to 200 as an optimum size;
- * a well-designed chapel as the focal point of the hall;
- * small sections to assist in building unity, along common corridors;
- * wide hallways;
- * ample common space throughout the hall, furnished and appointed to draw students;
- and,
- * large, centrally located rooms for resident assistants.

The Committee believes these elements will enhance the sense of community in the new residence facilities the University constructs. While it views these as highly desirable in each of the four new halls contemplated by the University's strategic plan, it does not support the replication of a single "model" facility across campus. The strength of each residential community flows in part from its uniqueness. It is imperative that each hall have both an interior and an exterior which set it apart, reflecting the distinctive community it houses and giving its residents their own identity.

When constructing new residence facilities, the University must also give careful thought to the placement of these buildings in relation to other structures. Beyond creating community within each building, cultivating a campus-wide sense of community must be a primary consideration in this process.

Recommendation 2. Renovate and improve existing residential facilities to address critical student life needs.

Due to budget constraints, renovations in most of the older residence halls have in the past generally been limited to urgent mechanical or structural repairs and modest enhancements in decor. Coupled with a campus occupancy rate consistently at or above 100%, the University has had neither the financial resources nor the “swing space” needed to make essential improvements. In many instances, the halls have remained virtually unchanged in the past 20 years, in spite of the fact that today’s incoming college student is accustomed to far more living space and amenities.

With the construction of new residence facilities and the allocation of the necessary resources for extensive renovation, the University can begin to address the most critical student housing need, namely to uncrowd the halls. Overcrowding has become a particularly acute issue in the last four years. The most serious overcrowding has occurred in the women’s halls as women comprise a larger percentage of each incoming class.

There are a significant number of rooms across campus which are not adequately sized for the number of students assigned to them. In addition, to accommodate first-year students, the Office of Residence Life and Housing has had to convert many more study lounges than in years past. While lounge space had previously served as temporary housing for first-years, many of the students assigned to study lounges now live there for the entire academic year.

In light of the serious challenges presented by such overcrowding, the Committee urges the University to undertake extensive renovation of the older residence halls as soon as possible. The “uncrowding” of student rooms and the creation of much-needed common space for study and

socializing should be the primary goals of the renovation process. Student satisfaction with residential life remains high, but our failure to address these issues will, over time, result in an erosion of this prized aspect of the undergraduate experience.

Throughout the construction and renovation process, the University must exercise care to avoid creating great disparities among the various facilities. Such disparities would obviously diminish the appeal of some halls. To ensure a certain degree of consistency across campus, the Committee recommends that, at a minimum, each hall offer:

- * adequate living space in student rooms;
- * uniformity of access to technology, e.g., cable TV, music share network;
- * attractive study space;
- * a well-equipped exercise room;
- * air conditioning in common areas and in student rooms where practical;
- * ample hall storage space;
- * adequate kitchen facilities and a dining room;
- * sufficient common space, attractively appointed;
- * staff rooms sized to allow for student meetings;
- * a central desk area; and,
- * a hall staff office.

Recommendation 3. Construct larger, more attractive rooms and suites for seniors in new and existing halls.

The Student Affairs' strategic plan articulates a desire to retain more senior students on

campus. Ideally, residence halls house a substantial number of students from each class year, creating an environment where seniors and juniors provide leadership and serve as role models for underclassmen. The current on-campus rate for seniors is only 42%; in some halls, there are few seniors beyond the resident assistants. While this is not an optimum situation, the University cannot house more seniors on campus at this time given the already overcrowded conditions in the halls.

Assuming that the University will build four new residence halls, thus relieving overcrowding and creating new bed spaces, the Committee considered various options for retaining senior students on campus, including the possibility that one of the new facilities could be senior-only apartments or townhouses. It explored the desirability of this latter option in focus groups as well as through the Future of Residential Life Undergraduate Survey.

The Committee believes constructing a senior-only facility would serve to segregate the very leadership we hope to attract to the residence halls. Its perspective was shaped in part by our finding that student support for this idea was not particularly strong. Only 32% of respondents to the survey found the notion of a senior-only residence “very attractive.” Generally speaking, students value the opportunities for friendship and exchange that flow from living with older and younger students.

At the same time, the Committee is convinced the University must offer seniors living options which acknowledge their changing needs, especially for more space and privacy. Understandably, students value having bigger, better rooms as they progress through their undergraduate careers. By constructing a variety of rooms and suites specifically for seniors—some of which might offer more space and a unique design, others an attractive common room and a semi-private bath—the University can increase the number of seniors it retains on

campus. It is notable that 57% of survey respondents described the concept of senior suites as “very attractive.”

Special housing options for seniors should be available in every hall, whether new or renovated. These senior rooms and suites should also be interspersed with other room configurations within the residence halls, not segregated on a single floor or wing, in order to facilitate continued interaction between older and younger students.

Recommendation 4. Construct rector and in-residence faculty apartments which are spacious enough to house married couples and families.

Current rector and in-residence apartments are designed for single occupants, and constructing larger apartments will create more options, both in terms of rector recruitment and faculty residence in the halls. However, this particular recommendation must be read within the context of the broader recommendations offered by this Committee in the “Residence Hall Staffing” section of this report.

Recommendation 5. Ensure assistant rector apartments are adequately sized and feature similar amenities across campus.

Currently considerable disparity exists between assistant rector apartments across campus. Some are quite spacious and have kitchens; others are far less attractive. These variations in living quarters have a direct impact on the recruitment efforts of rectors, putting at a distinct disadvantage those with less comfortable apartments to offer to potential assistant rectors. While complete parity is neither possible nor necessary, a certain degree of uniformity is desirable.

Recommendation 6. Construct classrooms in residence halls.

With the ability to schedule classes in the residence halls, faculty and students will have the

opportunity to interact comfortably in what has traditionally been considered student space. Faculty who have been at Notre Dame for many years sometimes hesitate to enter the halls, fearing their presence will be viewed as an intrusion. Students, on the other hand, often express interest in having more interaction with faculty in informal settings but are frequently reluctant to initiate conversation. While the addition of classrooms to the halls cannot, in and of itself, foster closer ties between faculty and students, it will constitute progress toward better integration of academic and student life.

The Committee recommends the construction of small seminar rooms in three or four halls initially, with the addition of more classrooms in other halls if these prove successful in bringing faculty and students together. When not scheduled for class meetings, the seminar rooms could be used by hall residents for group study.

II. GRADUATE FACILITIES

Recommendation 7. Replace Student Family Housing (University Village) with affordable townhouses constructed around a community center.

Student Family Housing (University Village) was constructed in 1963 to house married students, most of them graduate students. Today the complex is home to approximately 100 students and their families, including over 100 children. There is an urgent need to replace the aging buildings. In undertaking this new construction, it will be necessary for the University to weigh the inclusion of various amenities against the need to offer affordable housing. The results of the Committee's survey of graduate students indicate clearly that housing cost is the single most important consideration for this population, especially for students with families.

Many of those who responded to the Committee's Graduate Student Survey favored

townhouse-style living, because of the privacy and space it would provide. Whatever the design of the facility, the University must take great care to preserve the wonderful sense of community and mutual support currently enjoyed by families in Student Family Housing. The construction of an expanded community center, to include a playground and playing fields, will facilitate frequent gatherings. If the new Student Family Housing complex is not on the current site, the new location should still be within walking distance of campus, so that students and their families have easy access to University facilities.

CAMPUS FACILITIES

In addition to the residential facilities described above, the Committee views the construction of certain campus facilities contemplated by the University's Strategic Plan as essential if residential life is to continue to flourish at Notre Dame.

Recommendation 8: Construct a new student center, utilizing the current LaFortune Student Center as an anchor.

Comparisons with peer institutions suggest that relative to our on-campus residency rate, Notre Dame's student center should be twice its current size. The vitality of campus life depends to a great extent on the attractiveness and availability of social, recreational, and cultural offerings. Like many of the residence halls, LaFortune has not changed much in the last 20 years. The addition of Legends and the new DeBartolo Performing Arts Center to the campus scene are certainly very positive developments, but a great need for centralized social space on campus remains. In order to preserve the appeal of campus life, the construction of a new student center is imperative.

While there are challenges associated with building an expanded student center on the current site, it is essential that the student center remain at the heart of the campus. Moved to the perimeter of campus, it cannot serve as the kind of “village well” we envision, one that brings undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff together.

At a minimum, the new center should provide: a wider array of interesting, attractive eateries; more office space for student organizations and clubs; additional meeting/seminar rooms; larger venues for hall dances or performances; an expanded intercultural center; and a variety of lounges which students can utilize either for studying or socializing. In the course of meeting these needs, it will be important to create spaces within the student center which are inviting and intimate, not cavernous. LaFortune is a useful model in this regard; while inadequate in terms of total space, the first floor is attractive and well-utilized by students. A special committee should be constituted to consider in greater depth the design of the new student center.

Recommendation 9. Provide students with additional recreational athletic facilities.

There is significant need for additional recreational athletic facilities on campus. The Rockne Memorial, utilized exclusively for campus recreation, requires extensive renovation in order to continue to meet student needs. The strategic plan developed by Athletics also contemplates the addition of two artificial turf fields, the expansion of Rolfs Recreation Center, and the construction of a new field building near Stepan Fields for the purpose of offering students more options with regard to recreational athletic activity. The Committee wishes to underscore the importance of these strategic priorities. Participation in athletic activities obviously benefits students’ physical health and is an avenue for positive social interaction.

RESIDENTIAL LIFE POLICIES

As part of our study of the future of residential life, the Committee considered how institutional policies and practices can contribute to the University's residential goals. The Committee offers the following recommendations with regard to residential life policies.

Recommendation 10. House all class years within each undergraduate residence facility and continue the practice of random housing assignments for first-year students.

The Committee endorses the current “stay-hall” system in which students generally remain in the same residence hall during their years on campus. By remaining in the same hall, most students develop a strong connection to their residential community and experience a great sense of belonging. The “stay-hall” system makes it possible for the first-year student to live alongside the senior student, to the benefit of both.

Moreover, under our present system, first-year students are not grouped by intended major, interest, or lifestyle, and the Committee views the random hall and room assignments as a positive feature. Students derive many benefits flow from learning to live with other students with whom they have little in common. These housing assignments often lead to friendships which might not otherwise have developed. To the extent that roommate difficulties arise, hall staffs are well-equipped to support and assist students.

Because of the value the University places on interaction among students with a variety of backgrounds, interests, and experiences in the residence halls, “themed housing”—housing specifically organized around a field of study or other interest—is not currently an option for students at Notre Dame even as they progress beyond the first year. The Committee does not recommend a change in this

regard, with one exception. Committee members are concerned about students who are attempting to maintain their sobriety after treatment for difficulties with alcohol or other drugs; many of them would benefit greatly from living in an alcohol- and drug-free environment. The Committee recommends that the Office of Student Affairs explore the possibility of designating, on a trial basis and in close collaboration with hall staff, two sections (one male and one female) as substance-free to accommodate these recovering students.

Recommendation 11. Retain the current model of single-sex residence halls.

While most other colleges and universities offer coeducational housing, Notre Dame has had a long-standing tradition of single-sex residence halls. In focus groups conducted by the Committee, many students expressed appreciation for the unique opportunities within an all-male or all-female hall to create enduring friendships with fellow residents. Several noted the sense of community within Notre Dame's residence halls is much stronger than in housing facilities at other institutions and attributed this difference, in part, to being all-male or all-female.

While students' experience in single-sex residence halls is often very positive, gender relations are a serious concern on this campus. Students perceive that their ability to form good relationships with members of the opposite sex are hampered by parietal regulations and by a lack of attractive 24-hour space where they can study and socialize, both within the halls and across campus.

The Committee affirms the current single-sex residential model. At the same time, it recommends the University commit itself to expanding opportunities for positive interaction between women and men, both through programmatic offerings and the provision of plentiful, attractive 24-hour space in the halls and other campus buildings. In designing new residence

halls, serious consideration should be given to constructing male and female halls connected by common lobbies and shared study/activity space.

Recommendation 12. Offer discounts to students who commit to residing on campus for four years.

It is clear that financial considerations play a very significant role in student decisions about where to live. With a dramatic increase in the availability of affordable and relatively attractive housing close to campus in recent years, students have many options. Given the many positive aspects of residing on campus and the centrality of the residential experience for undergraduates, the University must ensure that the cost of campus housing remains affordable vis-a-vis the local housing market. As one avenue for accomplishing this, the Committee recommends offering a discounted rate on room and board to students and their families who make a four-year commitment to campus residency. This idea received strong support from students, with 64% of undergraduates in the Future of Residential Life survey describing this option as “very attractive.”

Recommendation 13. Provide on-campus seniors with access to better parking.

In addition to offering a greater variety of attractive housing options on-campus, the Office of Student Affairs should explore the possibility of giving on-campus seniors preferred parking in lots close to their halls. In the Committee’s Undergraduate Student Survey, campus parking was identified as an area of major student dissatisfaction in terms of facilities and services. While parking will always be a challenge on a pedestrian campus, offering seniors this privilege will increase the appeal of remaining on campus.

Recommendation 14. Award room and board grants to outstanding seniors who make exceptional contributions to campus life.

Resident assistants currently receive room and board as compensation for their service to the hall community. By offering a similar benefit to other students who are leaders, greater numbers of senior leaders will remain on campus, serving as important role models and mentors for younger students in the residence halls.

Recommendation 15. Strengthen the connection between students' academic experiences and residential life.

Over the years, the University has instituted a number of programs aimed at increasing faculty-student interaction and better integrating academic and student life. The Hall Fellows Program has been successful in some halls, less so in others. The Office of Student Affairs and the Provost's Office have partnered in the last three years to reinvigorate the position of hall academic commissioner across campus, again with some success, as evidenced by an increase in the number of academically-oriented programs being hosted in the residence halls. One of the most promising programs is a series of "Discernment Dinners," which brings together first-year students and faculty members to discuss the process of discerning a vocational path. While such programs hold promise, more must be done to integrate academics and student life, and Student Affairs and the Provost's Office must redouble their efforts. The Advisory Committee on Academics and Student Life (ACASL) can provide critical leadership in this regard.

Recommendation 16. Collaborate with International Study Programs to ensure students' smooth transition to and from these programs.

With 40% of undergraduates participating, international study has become an important aspect of the Notre Dame experience. At present, there is relatively little continuity between the experience of community living in campus residence halls and the various living situations of the international study programs. By forging closer ties with International Study Programs, Student Affairs will be better equipped to serve students before their international study experiences and to eliminate obstacles, whether real or perceived, which might interfere with students' transitions back to campus.

Recommendation 17. *Formulate a comprehensive plan for summer hall usage.*

Summer residence hall usage by sports camps, alumni groups, conferences, and University guests has been profitable for the University. However, the heavy use of the residence halls during the summer months has come at a certain expense to the regular academic year administration of the residence halls. Among other issues, current summer hall usage leaves little time for needed repairs or preventative maintenance. Building on the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Summer Programs (1998-99), the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Residence Life and Housing should thoroughly review all aspects of current summer usage and formulate a comprehensive plan which will allow for more judicious use of the residence halls during the summer months.

Recommendation 18. *Form a task group to study graduate student housing.*

The Committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing issues associated with graduate student housing, exploring these issues in focus groups and through the Graduate Student Survey. It became evident that while the Committee's vision for a new Student Family Housing community was relatively clear (Recommendation 7), its understanding of the University's goals and priorities in terms of housing for graduate students without families was less so. It is neither appropriate nor desirable to

simply replicate the model of undergraduate residential life in our graduate facilities; the needs and interests of graduate students are quite different than those of the 18- to 22-year-old college student. On the other hand, for the University to simply serve as “landlord” to graduate students also does not strike us as particularly desirable, especially given the proliferation in recent years of other affordable housing options in the local area. The Committee is convinced of the need for further dialogue about the University’s goals with regard to graduate student housing. Among the issues to be explored are: How should the University interpret its commitment to faith-based living in its graduate student housing facilities? How should the staffs of these facilities be structured and what is their primary purpose? What kind of housing would be most attractive to graduate students without families? The Committee recommends the creation of a separate task force for the purpose of addressing these and other related questions.

RESIDENCE HALL STAFFING

Because hall staffs play a vitally important role in student life, the Student Affairs’ strategic plan called for a careful study of the future of hall ministry. The Committee offers the following recommendations with regard to residence hall staffing.

Recommendation 19. Affirm the importance and centrality of the rector position.

Throughout Notre Dame’s history, the capable ministry of the hall rectors has been the foundation of residential life. We honor the invaluable contributions to student life made by those who have served in this role since the University’s founding and continue to do so today, especially members of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

The primary role of the rector is that of minister. Rectors, whether lay, professed religious, or priests, must be committed, first and foremost, to building Christian community within the residence halls. Living alongside students and modeling lives of faith as Catholics, rectors play a critical role in residential life and contribute greatly to Notre Dame's educational mission.

Recommendation 20. Redouble efforts to attract highly qualified candidates to the position of rector.

Traditionally, the majority of rectors at Notre Dame have been priests and professed religious. The declining numbers of men and women entering religious life has had a direct impact on the applicant pool for this position. The addition of a greater number of dedicated, highly competent lay colleagues to the ranks of rector has been a welcome one. At the same time, it is important, particularly in light of these changes, to give careful consideration to the qualifications those in this vital ministry should possess and to articulate what is essential about the rector position.

As already articulated, the primary role of the rector is as minister. Rectors must have the requisite training and experience to fulfill this role, with a graduate degree in ministry, counseling, student personnel, or a related field such as education, as well as a minimum of three to five years work experience in a related pastoral setting. Rectors also need a thorough understanding of the developmental issues facing college-age students, ideally having worked with this population. To the extent that rectors lack the desired educational background or work experience, Student Affairs should provide appropriate opportunities for professional development.

While the pastoral role of the rector must remain primary, strong administrative and communication skills are critical as well. In addition to working directly with students, rectors must

collaborate and consult with an ever-widening array of university departments, communicate well with parents, and interact with a variety of external constituencies. Another important responsibility of the rector involves the supervision and ongoing training of the assistant rectors and RAs, which requires that rectors be effective leaders and mentors. Finally, rectors must possess those personal qualities in terms of temperament and personality which will allow them to live and share daily life with students, while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Maturity, evidence of sound decision-making, and a certain breadth of life experience are essential.

Given changes in the applicant pool, it is necessary for the Office of Student Affairs to broaden its recruitment efforts and become more proactive in attracting highly qualified applicants to this position. In particular, Notre Dame must make greater efforts to recruit rectors from under-represented groups. Recruitment strategies should include:

- * continuing to actively recruit members of the Congregation of Holy Cross;
- * connecting with broader networks of professed religious, including (and especially) organizations for African-American religious, Hispanic/Latino religious communities, etc.;
- * contacting Notre Dame Masters of Divinity and Counseling graduates to explore their interest and/or the interest of their colleagues;
- * advertising through Catholic student personnel organizations;

- * networking with Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) graduates to identify potential candidates working in education;
- * utilizing the Notre Dame alumni network; and,
- * contacting those on the Center for Social Concerns list-serv and advertising in volunteer service publications.

When advertising and recruiting for this position, it is imperative that the University's expectations for rectors be articulated so that candidates have a clear sense of the position. This is crucial since the role of the residence hall rector at Notre Dame is in some ways quite different from that of hall directors at other institutions.

In considering rector recruitment, Student Affairs may wish to review the current salary structure for this position as well as consider the desirability of multi-year contracts.

Recommendation 21. Consider hiring married rectors.

While it is the sense of the Committee that the current model of unmarried rectors is generally preferred, it is open to the possibility of considering married rectors. In designing new residence halls and renovating existing halls, constructing apartments that could house a married couple should be a priority. As with all hiring of rectors, great care should be taken to identify married candidates who are well-equipped for this role pastorally, professionally, and personally; stability of the marital relationship and the spouse's willingness to interact with the hall community would also be important considerations.

Recommendation 22. Review current structures for rector supervision, training, and evaluation, especially for the newly hired.

The Committee affirms the current reporting structure, with rectors reporting directly to the

Vice President for Student Affairs. This structure underscores the importance and centrality of the rector position. The Vice President meets with each rector for an annual review and maintains close contact through regular rector meetings.

During the first two years of a rector's career, there is a need for additional, one-on-one supervisory meetings, ideally on a weekly basis, with a member of the Student Affairs Senior Staff. In addition to providing support and guidance on day-to-day matters related to running a residence hall, these supervisory meetings should be an opportunity for new rectors, especially those who are less familiar with Notre Dame, to participate in an ongoing dialogue about the mission of the University. In the past, rectors were frequently recruited from religious communities long associated with the University, coming to the residence halls with a very clear understanding of the context within which they would function. As we attract a broader spectrum of candidates to the rector position, the need grows to more explicitly articulate Notre Dame's mission, particularly as it relates to residential life.

In addition to providing more support to new rectors, Student Affairs should continue its efforts to improve training and professional development opportunities for all rectors. Workshops and in-service programs should be geared specifically to rectors and be viewed as opportunities to provide new information about student development issues as well as share "best practices." Each rector should also attend at least one professional conference a year in order to meet others engaged in similar work and stay abreast of developments relating to their work. Student Affairs should assist rectors in identifying conferences that would benefit them and facilitate rector attendance at these conferences.

Recommendation 23. Develop career and educational paths for rectors.

Given the uniqueness of the rector position at Notre Dame, it is not always clear how this position might “fit” into an individual’s long-range educational or career goals. This issue has become more pressing with the hiring of more lay rectors; rectors are interested in exploring the career and educational opportunities available to them both during and after their tenure as rector. Since the University places a great premium on continuity—preferring to hire rectors who will serve in this capacity for at least three years and ideally for several years beyond this minimum— Student Affairs must consider these larger questions as it seeks to recruit and retain highly qualified individuals in this position. In weighing potential options, however, great care must be taken to ensure that the rector’s primary focus remains the work with students in the residence hall. All other commitments should be limited to between 15 and 20 hours per week, and first-year rectors should, as a general rule, have no obligations or responsibilities beyond the residence hall.

In terms of educational options, a doctoral program in religious education or religious formation would have great appeal among rectors, and we recommend the University explore this possibility. Notre Dame does not currently offer a Master’s degree in Higher Education or Student Personnel but could establish a standing relationship with another institution which does offer these programs. Such educational opportunities would benefit both rectors and the students they serve and would contribute greatly to rector retention.

For those interested in broadening their professional experience, Student Affairs should consider regularly offering rectors part-time placements in other University offices, especially

within the division of Student Affairs. Again, these assignments should be limited in time and scope, so as not to interfere with their duties in the hall.

Recommendation 24. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of assistant rectors.

The Committee affirms the importance of the assistant rector position. As is true of rectors, assistant rectors should be viewed first and foremost as ministers, engaged in building Christian community alongside the rector. In selecting among candidates for this position, rectors should consider that their assistant rector could be called upon to step into their role in the event of illness or unexpected absence.

The creation of funding to allow for two assistant rectors in every hall on campus provides an opportune time for Student Affairs to revisit the job responsibilities of assistant rectors. There are currently significant differences in how they are utilized. Some assistant rectors coordinate hall liturgies and serve in a largely pastoral role, others work primarily with hall government and student disciplinary issues. Some of these differences were related to the difference between having one or two assistant rectors; others occur along gender lines, with male and female ARs functioning differently according to the needs of their residents, and still others flow from rectors' varying styles of leadership. When uniform staffing becomes a reality in Fall 2005, Student Affairs, in consultation with rectors, should develop guidelines to assist rectors in assigning assistant rector responsibilities.

One area where all assistant rectors currently have some responsibility involves hall programming. Assistant rectors have expressed a desire for greater clarity with regard to their responsibility for these programs, particularly vis-a-vis the various hall commissioners. Some assistant rectors find themselves the primary planners for most hall programs, instead of supporting student

planning and organization of these events. Student Affairs and the Office of Residence Life and Housing should clarify expectations in this regard and, if necessary, provide hall commissioners with additional training and access to funding.

Recommendation 25. Review the assistant rector recruitment and hiring process.

Student Affairs should redouble its efforts to recruit more under-represented students as assistant rectors, by specifically inviting minority graduate and professional students to apply for this position. The presence of more assistant rectors from traditionally under-represented groups will further the University's goals of building Christian community and constitute great progress toward creating a welcoming environment.

To increase the size of the candidate pool, Student Affairs should ensure that every newly admitted graduate and professional student receives information about this position. Student Affairs should also cultivate faculty and departmental "recruiters" for the AR position, asking those who are familiar with the important work done by the assistant rectors to encourage likely candidates to apply.

Rectors and assistant rectors alike express dissatisfaction with the current hiring process for assistant rectors. Given that all rectors hire from the same pool of candidates, they often feel pressured to interview and make offers quickly to avoid losing strong candidates to other halls. Assistant rector candidates find themselves at the center of this flurry of activity and are often confused by what happens "behind-the-scenes" as rectors try to secure their top candidates. Student Affairs, together with rectors and assistant rectors, should thoroughly review the current hiring process and devise a new system to address the current difficulties.

Recommendation 26. *Improve assistant rector training and formalize the evaluation process.*

While there have been significant improvements in assistant rector training and development in recent years, more could be done. In particular, there is a need to engage assistant rectors more deeply on mission-related issues. By inviting their participation in dialogue about the University's vision of residential life, we transmit these values to the next generation and enhance our efforts at building Christian community.

In order to ensure that assistant rectors are meeting appropriate expectations and serving their hall communities well, the Committee recommends that assistant rectors be formally evaluated by their rectors at the end of the fall semester, with input from the Office of Residence Life and Housing.

Recommendation 27. *Continue the practice of hiring senior students as resident assistants.*

The resident assistant position is highly regarded at Notre Dame, by students, rectors, and Student Affairs administrators alike. Each year there are many more applicants than positions, and there is a distinct sense that only the very strongest students are selected. Student Affairs and Residence Life and Housing should ensure that the resident assistant position continues to enjoy this kind of respect and prestige; one way to do this is to continue to require resident assistants to be senior students. By limiting applicants to the most mature students who have truly demonstrated service and sustained commitment to the community over the course of their careers, this position will continue to be viewed as a premier leadership opportunity on campus.

Recommendation 28. *Enhance recruitment efforts for the resident assistant position, particularly among under-represented groups.*

Student Affairs advertises the resident assistant position through *The Observer* and through its website, but most of the current recruitment efforts happen at the hall level. Rectors encourage current RAs to speak with younger students who display leadership potential, thus cultivating their interest. While this method of recruitment has generally been highly effective, the Committee is concerned that under-represented students often perceive that they are not among those recruited for the RA position and thus do not consider applying for it. Student Affairs and Residence Life and Housing should ensure that under-represented students are actively encouraged to apply, through direct invitations from these offices and through the more indirect invitations which occur at the hall level.

Recommendation 29. *Improve the compensation package for resident assistants.*

Resident assistants currently receive room and board as compensation for their services. As a general rule, RAs are not permitted to accept any other employment because of the demands on their time and energies, leaving some without the ability to cover expenses. In order to ensure the current size and caliber of the applicant pool and to make it possible for students to apply for the position regardless of family income, there is a need to offer additional compensation and incentives. Possibilities might include: a stipend to cover living expenses; a discount at the Bookstore; Flex plan/meal additions; gift certificates for various campus businesses; and better parking and access to campus. Student Affairs, together with Residence Life and Housing, should investigate these options fully and act to offer additional incentives.

Recommendation 30. *Continue efforts to improve resident assistant training.*

Under the leadership of the Office of Residence Life and Housing, resident assistant training has greatly improved in recent years. RA training is designed not only to equip students to be competent

and compassionate RAs, but also to provide them with valuable life skills. Residence Life and Housing should continue their excellent work, reviewing and refining RA training annually to ensure the highest possible quality and greatest responsiveness to changing student needs.

Recommendation 31. *Continue to give highest priority to members of the Congregation of Holy Cross in terms of in-residence assignments.*

The Congregation of Holy Cross is committed to a residential priestly ministry at Notre Dame. This ministry extends beyond a sacramental role in hall liturgies, although this is clearly an important aspect; rather, it envisions Holy Cross priests in residence, living and interacting with students. It is in sharing daily life that the traditions of Holy Cross and Notre Dame are imparted. Because of their long tradition of residential ministry and the invaluable contributions they make, the Committee recommends that Student Affairs continue to give highest priority to Holy Cross in making in-residence assignments across campus.

Recommendation 32. *Invite non-CSC faculty to live in-residence.*

With the construction of in-residence or faculty apartments spacious enough to accommodate a married couple or family (Recommendation 4), it becomes possible to invite a wider array of faculty members to live in-residence. Where feasible, Student Affairs should invite members of the faculty to live in the residence halls, as a means of enriching both the academic and residential experiences of students.

Assuming that faculty members will avail themselves of these opportunities, there will be a need to articulate clearly the expectations for those who live in-residence. At a minimum, faculty members residing in the halls must demonstrate a commitment to participating in a residential experience of

Christian community and a desire to be actively involved in student life.

CONCLUSION

The Committee is grateful for the opportunity through this report to participate in shaping the future of residential life at Notre Dame. As articulated in the University's mission statement, "residential life endeavors to develop that sense of community and of responsibility that prepares students for subsequent leadership in a society that is at once more human and more divine." Alongside the teaching and learning which take place in the classroom, students encounter in the residence halls an environment which supports the development of their gifts and encourages them to consider faith's role in their lives. As we look to the future, we must ensure that structures and resources are in place to sustain and strengthen this vital aspect of the University's mission.

APPENDIX

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE

SURVEY RESULTS, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Undergraduate Survey

The Undergraduate Survey was designed by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Residential Life with assistance from the Office of Institutional Research and was administered electronically in the Spring of 2004.

The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to a stratified random sample of 1,033 students and all 163 Resident Assistants. The overall response rate was 54% (or 646 students).

Student Response Rates by Category:

Off-site	37.2%
Off-campus	39.0%
On-campus	66.3%
RAs	49.0%

The Undergraduate Survey explored three areas: I) students' satisfaction with their housing situation; II) factors students consider in assessing the "livability" of various housing options as well as factors upon which they base their housing choices; and, III) the attractiveness of various on-campus housing options the University might offer in the future.

I. Satisfaction Ratings

- A. Students are satisfied with campus housing, with 18 of 26 measures showing satisfaction ratings of 70% or higher.
- B. Off-campus students are also satisfied with their situations. On 6 of 8 measures, satisfaction ratings were 70% or higher.
- C. Costs and parking are the major areas of dissatisfaction on campus in terms of facilities and services.
- D. With regard to residence hall policies, 50% are dissatisfied with the content of parietals rules and 26% are dissatisfied with their enforcement. On alcohol, 43% are dissatisfied with content and 34% with enforcement.

- E. Overall, women are more satisfied with on-campus housing than men. Off-campus students are significantly more satisfied with their respective amount of living space, noise level, access to bathrooms, and overall facility. Students on campus are more satisfied with safety and security.
- F. Twenty-two percent of on-campus students are satisfied with room and board costs compared to 72% of off-campus students.
- G. Residents of larger halls (+275 for men, +250 for women) reported less satisfaction with hall size than residents of medium or small halls. Small halls also showed higher satisfaction with section size than large halls. However, there were no statistically significant differences by hall size with regard to students' sense of community.

II. Livability and Choice Factor Rankings

- A. When assessing livability, students categorize certain features such as Internet access, access to laundry facilities, storage and social space, and cable hook-up as essential or very important. However, these are not the items they identify as essential when making choices about where they will live. This suggests that students generally take for granted the features listed above.
- B. Items which students identified as very important both in terms of livability and in making choices about housing: cost, living with friends, and amount of living space.
- C. Importance of a single room is relatively low for FY and sophomores at 13%, but rises to 55% for juniors and seniors.
- D. Single rooms, private baths, food preparation, and proximity to parking are more important to off-campus students; high-speed Internet access, outdoor recreational space, ease of eating with friends, sense of community, and spiritual nurturance are more important to on-campus students.
- E. The most noticeable trade-off for off-campus students is community for cost. Community is more important to on-campus students than to off-campus, and on-campus students rank it among the top four criteria in deciding where to live. Off-campus students also rank community as important but do not include it in their top four criteria. Cost, on the other hand, is important to all students, but more off-campus students include it in their top four criteria.

III. Future Housing Options

- A. When asked to assess the attractiveness of several possible future options, students responded as follows:

Unrestricted visitation	67% very attractive
Multi-year discounts	64% very attractive
Senior suites	57% very attractive

Coed housing (by floor)	39% very attractive
Senior-only residence	32% very attractive

Graduate Student Survey

Administered in the Spring 2004, the Graduate Student Survey was sent electronically to 250 on-campus and 500 off-campus graduate students. The response rate was 62% (or 466 students).

The Graduate Student Survey explored three areas: I) students' satisfaction with their housing situation; II) factors students consider in assessing the "livability" of various housing options as well as factors upon which they base their housing choices; and, III) the attractiveness of various on-campus housing options the University might offer in the future.

I. Satisfaction

- A. In general, graduate students residing on campus are less satisfied than undergraduates. Fischer residents are most satisfied with Internet access, safety and security, and building maintenance, and least satisfied with housing costs, utility costs, and a sense of community. O'Hara-Grace residents are most satisfied with safety and security, ease of getting to campus, and amount of living space, and least satisfied with available amenities, housing costs, and utility costs. Student Family/Cripe Street residents are most satisfied with Internet access, safety and security, and neighbors/sense of community, and least satisfied with available amenities, proximity to good schools/daycare, and utility costs.

II. Livability/Choice Factor Ratings

- A. Graduate students ranked affordability, ease of getting to campus, safety and security, and a quiet environment as essential or most important in terms of livability.
- B. In making decisions about where to live, the single biggest factor for graduate students is cost. Safety and security, proximity to campus, and living space are also important.

III. Future Options

- A. When asked about possible future housing options, graduate students ranked as most attractive:
1. studio apartments
 2. townhouses
 3. single rooms in a graduate hall