

## **Student Housing Review Committee, 2010-2011**

Final Report, November 2011

During the spring semester, 2010, after consulting with the board of trustees, President Nugent charged a committee of faculty, students, and staff with examining all aspects of student housing at Kenyon to ensure that the program was aligned with the College's mission. President Nugent's charge to the committee appears in full on page 12 below.

The following served on the Student Housing Review committee:

Hank Toutain, Dean of Students, co-chair

Jeff Bowman, Professor of History, co-chair

James Beckett, class of 2011

Christian Martinez-Canchola, class of 2012

Brackett Deniston, trustee, class of 1969

Adam Exline, Assistant Building Coordinator / Coordinator of Intramural and Club Sports, class of 2001

Sarah Gill-Williams, College Counselor

Sarah Heidt, Associate Professor of English, class of 1997

Bob Hooper, Director of Campus Safety

Bob Mauck, Associate Professor of Biology

Laura Kirschenbaum, class of 2011

Marla Kohlman, Associate Professor of Sociology

Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services, class of 1979

Ben Viccellio, Assistant Professor of Drama, class of 1998

Aaron Yeoh, class of 2012

The committee identified much to celebrate about student housing at Kenyon. Many Kenyon students reported themselves deliriously happy in their living spaces. The completion of new housing on North Campus will allow many more students to live in apartment-like facilities that are especially suited for juniors and seniors who will soon transition to the world beyond College. The expansion of the housing stock should also allow the College to renovate some residence halls that are in great need of remediation, renovation and up-grading. And it is clear that some student groups living together in community make vital contributions to the campus more generally. At the same time, there are causes for concern. College residential facilities are at or beyond capacity. To accommodate increasing enrollments, many common spaces (lounges) have been converted into rooms. Some students lament the lack of dedicated study spaces in residence halls. Some members of the community express deep concern about Division Housing. Some CAs feel that tension exists between their programming responsibilities and their charge to connect with their residents. Some students feel a sharp disconnect between their academic work and their lives in the residence halls. Given the fact that Kenyon is a small, *residential* liberal arts college, this disconnect is startling and disappointing.

The committee's report consists of three sections that appear below in the following order: (1) a list of recommendations that might address current shortcomings in student

housing and should ensure that the student housing program supports the College's educational mission, (2) a brief description of the committee's work over the course of the 2010-2011 academic year, and (3) more extended discussion of the issues the committee examined and the rationale for the committee's recommendations. The third section is organized around a set of ten key questions the committee identified as being particularly important. These three sections are followed by two appendices: President Nugent's charge to the committee and a report on Theme and Division Housing prepared by the Housing and Dining Subcommittee of Student Council.

## **Part I. Recommendations**

- Increase College student housing capacity so that:
  - It is possible to accommodate all students enrolled for courses on campus in College housing;
  - Current overcrowding (former single rooms converted to doubles; former double rooms converted to triples, etc.) is eliminated;
  - Common areas for study and socializing (lounges) are recaptured or created in all residential facilities;
  - Room flexibility exists to accommodate necessary housing reassignments due to health, incompatibility, or facility needs;
  - Sufficient “swing space” exists to permit the ongoing refurbishment of student residential facilities.
- Ensure that all groups participating in Division and Theme housing have a focused and well-defined program and a clear sense of their responsibilities. Ensure that both housing groups be supported in their programming and carefully monitored with regard to the realization of their stated objectives. The newly developed Board of Division Housing, which appears to be functioning well, may provide a model for appropriate support and oversight of both theme and division housing.
- Appoint a small group of faculty, students, and staff to review housing practices of other residential liberal arts colleges to see if there are innovative ideas that Kenyon might borrow.
- Allocate at least some particularly desirable housing to students who have shown themselves especially eager to contribute to the academic and extra-curricular life of the College.
- Clarify the relationship between Community Advisers (CAs) and Head CAs. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of CAs, and job expectations insofar as residential programming is concerned. Provide CAs with more detailed information about area- or population-specific expectations for community building, programming, and management. Appoint a small group composed of Community Advisers, Housing and Residential Life staff and members of the Student Housing Review Committee to work on this task and to make specific recommendations
- Promote and provide resources in support of residence hall activities that further student-faculty interaction.

- Identify more informal spaces for social interaction and more spaces designated for study in residence halls.

## **Part II. Description of the Committee's Work**

During the first half of the 2010-2011 academic year, the committee devoted its energies to gathering information. Members of the committee toured every residence hall on campus. Alicia Dugas, Assistant Dean of Students for Housing and Residential Life, made extensive presentations of material related to the operation of her office. Among other things, she described the workings of the housing lottery, Division housing, Theme housing, and the Community Advisor (CA) program. At a separate meeting, a group of CAs spoke to the committee about their experiences and, more generally, about the residential life program.

Having gathered a great deal of information about student housing, the committee began to examine the question of whether Kenyon's current housing practices were aligned with the mission of the College. By the end of fall semester 2010, the committee had identified ten key questions it believed merited further pursuit.

### **Ten Questions about Student Housing**

1. Who should live in the first four units of North Campus Housing?
2. Does the College have enough space to house its students? If not, how much do we need?
3. How do themed and division housing support the mission of the College? Should we have more or less of either?
4. How do other schools enrich their housing programs? Do our peers have good ideas that we might borrow?
5. How might we engage in intentional programming that recognizes that students are at different places in their education (class year, different majors, etc.)? Does the current housing system respond to the varied needs of students at different points in their Kenyon careers?
6. If ideally learning occurs everywhere at Kenyon, what learning outcomes attach to living in College residence halls?
7. Does the CA program as it is currently constituted achieve its goals? Are there ways we might strengthen it?
8. How important to the learning environment are spaces that facilitate student-faculty contact outside the classroom? Should there be more academic, co-curricular, or para-curricular programming in residence halls? If so, what would it look like? Are students eager to connect with faculty members in more meaningful ways outside the classroom, and would residence

halls be a suitable context for this contact? Some contexts for faculty-student interactions include: film series and discussions; global issues series of talks; *NYT* Readership; "Last lecture" series, field trips, book clubs, community service, etc.)?

9. Do open/communal residential spaces support community programming? Should we seek to reclaim open/communal spaces in residence halls where faculty and students can connect with one another in meaningful ways outside the classroom that don't put faculty into students' personal spaces where both groups might feel uncomfortable? Should we consider "reclaiming" some space lost in residence halls to other groups or functions?

10. How can we ensure that the environment in residence halls and student housing more generally supports the broader mission of the College? Is there something we should do about the "culture" of the place? Is there currently a dis-connect between students' personal lives and what they're learning in the classroom. If so, should we be working to create a more seamless environment for learning?

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These questions served as a framework for the committee's work during the remainder of the year. The committee formed smaller working groups, and each working group devoted its attention to one of the questions listed above. Each member of the larger committee worked in two working groups. Toward the end of the spring semester, the entire committee reconvened for several meetings at which the working groups presented their findings.

The remainder of the committee's report is presented as responses to these ten questions. At some points, the questions overlap, so an issue raised in response to one question might find echoes elsewhere in the report.

### **Part III. In-depth Discussion of the Ten Framing Questions**

#### **1. Who should live in the first four units of North Housing?**

Not all housing is equally desirable. The construction of new housing in North Campus afforded the committee an opportunity to think in concrete terms about how to ensure that student housing supports the College's mission. Thinking particularly of the new housing, the committee explored the question of whether such housing opportunities should be reserved for particularly meritorious students, and considered what "meritorious" might mean. Some members of the committee felt strongly that students who had shown themselves to be especially responsible members of the campus community should have a chance to live in the newest, and more desirable housing. Some members of the committee felt that high grades were not necessarily a sign of good citizenship. Ultimately, the committee felt that some minimum guidelines (e.g. a 2.6 GPA and no record of damage to college property) were desirable. The committee makes no specific recommendations about these controls, but does feel that particularly desirable housing should in some cases be allocated to students who have

shown themselves especially eager to contribute to the academic and extra-curricular life of the College.

## **2. Does the College have enough space to house its students? If not, how much do we need?**

The expectation that all Kenyon students live in College residences throughout their enrollment has not been met for many years because the capacity of College residence halls has been inadequate to accommodate student on-campus enrollment. This remains the case today, despite the “squeezing of students into residential spaces.” To address increasing demand, the College has converted singles into doubles, doubles into triples, and lounges into residential spaces. The College has also purchased formerly private housing including the Grill apartments, houses along Meadow Lane, and the Morgan Apartments. And the College has started construction of the North Campus Apartments. These steps have helped but housing capacity is still sorely taxed.

In addition, the effective management of student residential facilities requires some flexibility in order to accommodate a number of issues and situations that routinely arise in communal living environments -- from medical need, to resident incompatibility, to facility problems. Optimal residence hall occupancies, therefore, cannot realistically be 100%. In addition, because the maintenance of high-quality housing facilities requires their periodic repair, renovation, and refurbishment – work that frequently cannot be accomplished during summer months alone – it is necessary to have sufficient “swing space” to permit taking areas of student housing off line during the academic year. Unfortunately, because such “swing space” has not been available, regular refurbishment of existing residential facilities has not been possible for quite some time. The current and deficient condition of many facilities reflects this situation.

While student on-campus enrollment over the past five years has averaged 1,637 students, realistic residential capacity has hovered at around 1,600, a situation that has compelled the College to grant between a dozen to twenty students permission to live off campus annually.

Ideally, if Kenyon continues to desire a fully residential campus community of students, the number of student housing spaces should be two to three percent greater than enrollment plus 90 spaces in order to regularly take a residential section, floor, or area off line for major renovation, repair, or reconstruction.

## **3. How do themed and division housing support the mission of the College? Should we have more or less of either?**

Kenyon’s housing system currently recognizes two types of affinity housing. Division housing has traditionally been granted to fraternities in the historic residence halls. Themed housing is generally granted to smaller groups of students with similar academic or extra-curricular interests and has been widely distributed across campus. For example, new groups approved for Theme housing in 2011-2012 included Buddhist House, ISAK (International Society at Kenyon), Music Education and Performance House, and ECO/PEAS. The distinction between

the two types is not rigid; indeed, two Theme housing groups recently applied for and received Division housing. Both programs depend on the same logic: some well-established student groups with clearly defined interests benefit from living together. These housing arrangements should be beneficial not only to individual students but to the campus as a whole. The two groups that were recently awarded Division housing (the Firefighters and Wellness) clearly reflect this sense of purpose. In other words, with special privileges come greater responsibilities.

The Housing Review committee reviewed material related to these two programs including recent applications for Theme housing and information about the GPAs of students living in Theme and Division Housing. The Housing and Dining Committee of Student Council prepared an extensive and useful report on Theme and Division Housing, which is attached to this report as an appendix.

More detailed information about Themed and Division housing follows, but the committee makes the following general recommendations: (1) Division and Theme housing should be merged into a single program encompassing all student groups seeking special housing, (2) we should ensure that all groups participating in the program have a focused and well-defined program and a clear sense of their responsibilities, and (3) we should support both Division and Theme housing groups in their programming and carefully monitor them with regard to the realization of their stated objectives.

While the committee feels it is important to nurture affinity housing, it is not clear that we should try to increase the number of groups or students who participate in it. It is more important to have committed groups with high-quality programming than it is to have more groups.

### **More on Theme Housing**

In many respects, the Theme housing program is remarkably successful. During the 2020-11 academic year, eight theme housing groups planned and carried more than 150 programs including educational discussions and information sessions, social gatherings, shared meals, community service, peer mentoring and support groups, and fundraising measures. Groups included the Firefighters (members of Gambier's volunteer fire department), Chinese House, Wellness, and the KAC-Heads. Two groups applied for and were awarded division housing. For theme housing groups who have demonstrated a great commitment to the Kenyon student body, this sets a great precedent. The Housing and Dining Committee (or a similar successor group) must continue to show strong leadership in reviewing applications for Theme housing and set the bar high for application approvals.

The main challenge to the Theme Housing program comes from groups that fail to share responsibilities among their members or groups that are unable to come up with back-up plans for how they will fill the beds in their house if members drop out of the group.

### **More on Division Housing**

According to the Housing and Dining Committee report, in 2010-2011, division housing groups were "running on all cylinders." They attributed this energy to the creation of the Board

of Division Housing. This Board reviewed all existing groups and approved two new groups to live in Division housing. During the review process, the Board made recommendations to Dean Dugas, which were all approved. Some of these recommended changes were to contract the size of division group spaces and some were to redistribute or move assignments from one room to another. Because of the Division Housing Statute (from Campus Senate), there is a detailed document for division groups to use in guiding their group. The Statute calls for the review process and outlines requirements for groups. It requires each group's division housing coordinator to meet monthly with a Housing and Residential Life staff member to maintain good relations. This has promoted communication, understanding of processes, and solicitation of suggestions for procedural improvements. On the whole, division housing groups are doing well. The addition of three sorority groups into division housing in 2010-2011 has been a great success. Other groups have been welcoming and collaborative. Housing and Residential Life has worked with the groups to make the spaces their own and to submit work order request for needed improvements. The Wellness group and the Fire Fighters group give back to the community and have been a part of theme housing for at least five years. Meeting all of the requirements of division housing, the Board recommended they be granted the status of division housing.

There are also challenges. For the newest members of Division Housing - the three sororities - adjusting to the residence hall environment and division housing way of life has been difficult. The main challenge for the sororities is that they lack a consistent common space for events. Division "lounges" in general are challenging. Because there are lounges named after specific division housing groups particular ownership is implied whereas the lounges are for everyone's use, including independent students and non-division housing members. Some fraternities have struggled with recruitment of new members and so have sometimes been hard-pressed to fill their division housing spaces. Vandalism of shared spaces also tends to be more of a challenge in division housing areas. The above concerns need to be addressed to improve the residential experience for all.

For more on Theme and Division housing, see the report of the Housing and Dining Subcommittee of Student Council below.

#### **4. How do other schools enrich their housing programs? Do our peers have good ideas that we might borrow?**

Several members of the committee looked at some of our peers, but the committee generally focused its attention on what was happening on Kenyon's campus. The committee feels that there is an opportunity here for further study. Oberlin's "Final Year" program, for example, might be something to look at when thinking about question 5 below. Additionally, interesting student housing arrangements at peer and aspirant institutions should be examined further to see if some might well serve Kenyon.

#### **5. How might we engage in intentional programming that recognizes that students are at different places in their education (class year, different majors, etc.)? Does the current housing system respond to the varied needs of students at different points in their Kenyon careers?**

Housing should support the learning environment for all students. Generally speaking, the same environment will not suit all students. The needs (academic, extra-curricular, and social) of most seniors are not the same as those of most first-year students. Juniors and seniors should have the opportunity to live in more apartment-like settings. They tend to have established social networks, so there is less need for them to be introduced to large groups of their classmates. And they tend to be prepared to live more independently. The completion of both phases of North Campus housing should help the College accommodate student demand for different sorts of living arrangements.

#### **6. If ideally learning occurs everywhere at Kenyon, what learning outcomes attach to living in College residence halls?**

The mission of the Housing and Residential Life department at Kenyon is the creation of an environment that enhances student life, principally through the development of supportive, diverse, and lively residential communities that complement the learning that students acquire within more formal settings. It is the goal of the department of Housing and Residential Life to foster among residents mutual support, friendship, leadership, independence, and the development of responsibility, respect, and conflict resolution skills.

More detailed information about the learning outcomes attached to our Residential Life program is provided in Appendix Three.

#### **7. Does the CA program as its currently constituted achieve its goals? Are there ways we might strengthen it?**

Community Advisers (CAs) and the significant work that they do are essential to the Residential Life program and to the realization of its goals (identified above). Members of the Committee were mightily impressed with the commitment, enthusiasm, and efficacy of the Community Advisers with whom they met. CAs are greatly invested in their work and appear to find much satisfaction in developing strong relationships with their residents, helping the development of community in their residential units, and in being of assistance to their peers as information resources, referral agents, and sources of individual support and assistance.

Because they are growing themselves – in self-knowledge, leadership, and skill development -- we should provide CAs with a consistent and helpful forum for evaluation, feedback and discussion throughout the academic year. This might occur in a number of ways and should include residents and peers as well as Residential Life staff. The relationship between CAs and Head CAs should be clarified, as should specific area assignments, roles and responsibilities, and job expectations insofar as residential programming is concerned. While it may be impractical in the staff selection process to fully delineate the many ways in which CA assignments differ according to residential populations, residential communities, housing groups (theme, Division, etc.), and facilities, some greater attention should be given to explaining to CA candidates, prior to their assignments, the ways in which CA roles and responsibilities differ within the Housing and Residential Life system. Providing them with

additional and more detailed information about building, area, or population-specific expectations for community building, programming, and management might positively contribute to attracting CA candidates with experiences, skills, talents and interests that dovetail well with varying staff roles and responsibilities, more appropriate staff placements, and CA job satisfaction.

**8. How important to the learning environment are spaces that facilitate student-faculty contact outside the classroom? Should there be more academic, co-curricular, para-curricular programming in residence halls? If so, what would it look like? Are students eager to connect with faculty members in more meaningful ways outside the classroom, and would residence halls be a suitable context for this contact? Some contexts for faculty-student interactions include: film series and discussions; global issues series of talks; *NYT* Readership; "Last lecture" series, field trips, book clubs, community service, etc.)**

This is a difficult question. Ideally, the committee feels that the campus should be a seamless learning environment. Programming in residence halls could and should contribute to student learning. At the same time, there are real challenges. Some CAs lamented that when they organized programming like the "Last Lecture" series, very few students attended. Some faculty members are not eager to become involved in programming in residence halls. Some students feel that residence halls should be faculty-free zones where they can roam without danger of encountering other adults or the threat of being expected to learn something. This last comment reflects a very natural desire by students for a certain degree of privacy. On the other hand, Kenyon is a *residential* college, and we must believe that there is some benefit to living in common, even if not under the same roof. In general, the committee felt that it was important to support residence hall activities that support student-faculty interaction, engagement, and relationship-building. Events in "neutral" campus spaces like Crozier and Snowden, or the Horn and Peirce, organized by CAs, might be ideal because they remove the faculty-in-residence-halls issue altogether *and* might easily involve more than just one residence hall's students.

Another impediment to more robust student-faculty interaction may be the broader campus problem of over-commitment. Students and faculty are already so tightly scheduled that *adding* anything to anyone's schedule without taking away something seems neither appealing nor practical.

**9. Do our open/communal spaces support community programming? Should we seek to reclaim open/communal spaces in residence halls where faculty and students can connect with one another in meaningful ways outside the classroom that don't put faculty into students' personal spaces where both groups might feel uncomfortable? Should we consider "reclaiming" some space lost in residence halls to other groups or functions?**

The committee felt that residence halls should have more informal spaces for social interaction and more spaces designated for study. Kitchens (especially on south campus) would be particularly welcome. Residence halls generally lack spaces devoted to quiet study. It would

make sense then, in accordance with the role of intellectual curiosity and pursuit within the College's mission, to find or create within residence halls spaces that *encourage* student learning. This would require not only adequate and appropriate spaces, but lighting and furniture conducive to study. The committee also thought that some spaces in residence halls currently accommodating individual students or given over to other functions might be reclaimed as common student spaces. The small working group that examined this question made some particular suggestions. Hanna and Leonard lounges might be reworked as study lounges if suitable spaces could be identified for the storage of group murals and memorabilia. The ends of the fourth-floor Leonard could be overhauled into study spaces, while the middle could be a room with a kitchen and TV room. The fire panel rooms in Mather and McBride might also make quiet, albeit very small study spaces, as a stopgap until we can reclaim the old study lounges that have now been converted to student rooms.

The committee also discussed the idea of housing faculty members in residence halls. We had an opportunity to initiate/revive a faculty-in-residence program this fall by inviting faculty to live in an apartment in Manning Hall that became available as a result of the relocation of a Residential Life staff member to the North Campus Apartments. This arrangement has allowed one faculty member, Professor Jan Kmetko from the Physics Department, to live in a residence hall and to interact with students, staff and faculty within a community living setting. We are excited to report that Professor Kmetko has been enjoying his residency and that he is doing a fantastic job bridging the gap between faculty, students, staff and helping to "build community." He has hosted five dinners in his apartment that have included fellow faculty members, staff and students. He will be pairing up with CAs to sponsor other programs, has attended CA training, gotten to know the staff and in general learned a great deal about campus student life. He will be writing at least one article in *the Collegian* and has been asked to comment on his residential experiences at a Faculty Meeting. If this pilot program is deemed successful by both faculty and residential students it should be expanded to other residential areas.

**10. How can we ensure that the environment in residence halls and student housing more generally supports the broader mission of the College? Is there something we should do about the "culture" of the place? Is there currently a disconnect between students' personal lives and what they're learning in the classroom. If so, should we be working to create a more seamless environment for learning?**

Part of the committee's response to this question is implicit in responses to questions above. The idea of community is very important to Kenyon's campus culture, and our Residential Life program should and does contribute to that culture. The committee feels that we should examine carefully the nature and degree of faculty engagement in residence halls and attempt to identify and implement initiatives that are both beneficial to the student residential community and realistic and rewarding for faculty members. Themed housing is one very particular and often successful example of how we might bridge the academic program and residential life. Here too, the committee felt that the lack of spaces for social interaction and study in some residence halls was a serious shortcoming. Finally, and in agreement with other comments above, the committee believes that the role of the Community Advisor should

be examined further to assure its appropriate scope, focus, compensation, training and ratio to residents. In particular, the role of the CA as informal counselor, community builder and “enforcer” should be reviewed.

## **Appendix One: Charge to the Committee**

*“To be a residential college means more than that the College provides dormitory and dining space for its students. It argues a relationship between students and professors that goes beyond the classroom. It emphasizes that students learn and develop, intellectually and socially, from their fellows and from their own responses to corporate living.”*

"Kenyon College : Its Mission and Goals"

If Kenyon is to fulfill the claim that the essence of being "a residential college" goes beyond the mere provision of real estate, then it is necessary that we re-consider periodically how the residential aspect of students' lives at Kenyon can best contribute to their overall educational experience here. Given the College's current engagement in reaccreditation, the fact that twenty years have passed since the last wide-scale effort to evaluate housing and student life at Kenyon, and the prospect that the College will soon be adding new housing stock, this is a very appropriate moment to engage in such a re-consideration. We know--for example, from research carried out in the process of re-accreditation--that residential life is the aspect of the College considered least satisfactory by both students and parents. Recently, a number of faculty members have stepped forward to call for a systematic evaluation of the student housing system at Kenyon to ensure that it supports our core mission.

A thorough review of student residential life will include: 1) an evaluation of Kenyon's current and planned housing stock and its relative desirability, 2) an examination of the procedures by which housing is distributed, and 3) a consideration of how living arrangements at the College can best contribute to the overall learning experience of our students. With respect to the latter, it will be important to evaluate systematically how a variety of living arrangements might best foster the mission of the College. In recent years, many colleges and universities have developed new ways of connecting more closely to one another the living and learning experiences of their students. As well as understanding the College's own history and practices in this regard, it will be critical to learn more about alternative arrangements and to consider whether some fresh ideas about residential life might be appropriate at Kenyon.

Our mission statement also speaks of "a relationship between students and professors that goes beyond the classroom." The accessibility of faculty members and the close relationships between students and faculty are aspects of Kenyon with which students and parents are most satisfied and which they value very highly. At Kenyon we take pride in the intimate size and nature of our community and the living arrangements made possible by the close proximity of Village and College. For decades, we have cherished the tradition of students being invited into faculty members' homes. In recent years, however, that possibility has

diminished, in part because of the lack of attractive housing stock available in the Village. A survey of housing undertaken in 2007 showed that, at that time, no junior faculty member owned a home in the village. In addition to a thorough study of student housing, we need also to consider the housing for faculty (and staff) available in the Village. We will need to thoroughly understand the current Gambier housing options and market, examine housing options that have been developed by other institutions like us, and consider whether Kenyon might be able to find ways to increase attractive options for faculty and staff members who wish to live in the Village.

**Appendix Two: Theme and Division Housing Update, Spring 2011**  
[prepared by the Housing and Dining Subcommittee of Student Council]

## **I. Theme Housing**

### **A. Successes**

- In total, the eight theme housing groups have planned and carried out an impressive assortment of programs this year, adding up to over 150, and the year is not over yet. Events have included educational discussions and information sessions, social gatherings, shared meals, community service, peer mentoring and support groups, and fundraising measures.
- Of the eight theme housing groups this year, two have applied for and been awarded division housing. For theme housing groups who have demonstrated a great commitment to the Kenyon student body, this sets a great precedent.
- The Housing and Dining Committee has seen strong leadership under the current Chair, Laura Kirschenbaum. As a three year veteran on the committee, Laura has brought her experience and knowledge of past theme housing groups. She has helped the committee raise the expectations of the students living in theme housing. Committee members have also used more discretion when choosing groups to live in theme housing; they have acknowledged theme housing as a right, not a privilege. Out of the 14 groups who applied for the 2011-2012 academic year, just six were awarded housing. The members of the committee have gained more respect from their peers and the committee has doubled in size over the last two years, to its current size of 17 members.
- The Theme Housing Community Advisor, Rachel Walsh, has done a great job in her first year of the position. She has held the theme housing groups accountable by constantly communicating with the residents in each space and has tracked her conversations by keeping a binder of all communication. The Theme CA has attended programs held by each of the groups and has reported their progress back to the Housing and Dining Committee on an ongoing basis.
- This year there has been an increased amount of documentation of theme housing information. The Assistant Director has kept a binder as well as electronic files to enhance the knowledge base of the AD in future years. Examples of helpful documents include: 1) a scheduled task list for the year, mapping out when important functions of theme housing take place, 2) a copy of the Theme CA contract, 3) past theme housing applications, 4) theme housing workshop information, 5) a budget sheet, 6) an advertising plan, 7) approval and denial letters from theme housing reviews, and 8) meeting minutes.

## B. Challenges:

- One of the challenges theme housing has faced this year has been that groups have not used the \$50 allocated to them each semester. While the groups are strongly encouraged to find funding in addition to the money they are given from the Office of Housing and Residential Life, the students often use their own money or rely solely on Fun Funds from the Student Activities Office to cover the cost of their events.
- Another concern for theme housing comes from the lack of shared responsibilities among group members. In every group, there is an uneven division of the workload. For some groups this is not a problem since all of the members all take on at least some small part, and are committed to the cause. For a couple groups, this means one person is shouldering all of the responsibility, which has led to unhealthy group dynamics. One lesson the Committee has learned is that it is wise not to house all sophomore groups together in apartment areas unless they exhibit a great deal of commitment to their theme topic and have demonstrated rapport with one another. A second lesson the committee has learned is to not approve housing for groups that are unable to come up with back-up plans for how they will fill the beds in their house if members drop out of the group. Two of the theme groups this year had open beds in their areas for most of the year.
- A third issue plaguing theme housing this year has been maintenance issues in the three stand alone houses down on south campus (Cai, Spaid, Murnen). These houses, while great for the amount of programming space they offer, are in constant need of maintenance throughout the year. The main concerns that have cropped up this year are leaks in the basements and bathrooms, animal infestations (squirrels, wasps, birds), ripped screens and shoddy door lock mechanisms causing safety hazards, and garbage spilling out of the sheds onto the lawns. These three houses are also considered by students to be “quite a hike” from main campus which can sometimes cause difficulty drawing crowds.

## C. Room for improvement

- In addition to the concerns mentioned above, theme housing can also be improved upon by updating the theme housing application. The current application serves a limited function, which seems to be communication about the topic of housing and general program planning. By adding GPA and student conduct history standards, the application would be more comprehensive. In addition, it would be good to have students answer a question about advisor involvement and how they plan to go about communicating with their advisers.
- Another way theme housing can be improved upon is by having more formal communication between the groups and their CA. Ways to accomplish this include: 1) having groups fill out a bi-weekly or monthly update report, 2) creating a more in-depth

workshop agenda with a communication plan, and/or 3) asking each groups' liaison to give an update on their groups' progress at the Housing and Dining meetings each week.

- Advisor involvement could also use some improvement. An initial step in the right direction this year seemed to be inviting the advisers for coffee at the start of the semester.

## **II. Division Housing**

### **A. Successes**

- Compared to previous years, this year's division housing groups are running on all cylinders. This is likely attributed to the creation of the Board of Division Housing. This Board has reviewed all current groups and approved two new groups to live in division housing for next year. During the review process, the Board made recommendations to Dean Dugas, which were all approved. Some of these recommended changes were to contract the size of division group spaces and some were to redistribute or move assignments from one room to another. Because of the Division Housing Statute (from Campus Senate), there is a detailed document for division groups to use in guiding their group. The Statute calls for the review process and outlines requirements for groups. It requires each group's division housing coordinator to meet monthly with a Housing and Residential Life staff member to maintain good relations. This has promoted communication, understanding of processes, and solicitation of suggestions for procedural improvements. On the whole, division housing groups are doing well.
- The addition of the three sorority groups into division housing for the current academic year has been a great success. Other groups have been welcoming and collaborative. Housing and Residential Life has worked with the groups to make the spaces their own and to submit work order request for needed improvements.
- The addition of two new groups into division housing for the next academic year is a success: the Wellness group and the Fire Fighters group. These two groups give back to the community and have been a part of theme housing for at least five years. Meeting all of the requirements of division housing, the Board recommended they be granted the status of division housing.
- The Board itself has been running smoothly. Effective meetings have resulted in collaborative recommendations, all of which have been approved.
- In general, division housing groups seem to be reacting to the Board's review process and the monthly communication with Housing and Residential Life in positive ways that has benefited the residential experience for all involved.

## B. Challenges

- For the newest members - the three sororities - adjusting to the residence hall environment and division housing way of life has been difficult. The main challenge for the three sororities is that they all share one lounge on the top floor of Leonard Hall. The other two division groups in Leonard each have a lounge, but these three groups share one lounge (called "the Sorority Lounge"). The reason they have been challenged is because of a lack of consistent common space for events. When these groups were a part of theme housing and had an apartment instead of a section of a residence hall, they had a place to have gatherings and registered parties. Registered parties (with alcohol) are not permitted in the top floor Leonard lounges, so this difference was something the members were not fully prepared to adjust to going into the year. So, from the perspective of some of the groups, the party policies in effect are challenging to their groups to have social gatherings with alcohol.
- The topic of "lounges" in general has had a challenging tone this year (as in previous years). In summary, there are lounges named after groups which implies ownership or administrative rights (such as reservations) whereas the lounges are owned by the College and reserved by Housing and Residential Life. It is important for independent students, non-division housing members, to have common spaces in residential facilities in which to lounge. Because most of the division housing group lounges are named after or referred to as a specific group's lounge (and because they are permitted to paint "their" lounge and do other similar types of things with Housing and Residential Life's consultation), the topic of lounges in these areas is not clear. It is confusing and blurry. Some groups or independent students are not confident enough to use spaces that they feel does not belong to them or their group.
- Some fraternities have struggled with recruitment of group members, which then leads to struggles of filling their division housing spaces. This challenge was one which was scrutinized in the review process to make changes based on several years of historical occupancy data.
- Vandalism of shared spaces tends to be more of a challenge in division housing areas. Almost all of the campus-wide parties are sponsored by division housing groups or are in division housing areas. This leads to more traffic in these areas (by people consuming alcohol), which may result in vandalism (most likely by non-members). These damages could be a broken window or a paper towel dispenser removed from a wall - or it could be silly string all over a hallway or black marker graffiti on a wall. This higher traffic may also lead to more trash, more incidents of visible vomit (in hallways, staircases, etc.), and more noise. It does not seem that these groups have proven plans to combat any of this. In fact, it seems as if the groups are concerned only with maintaining the status quo. This area needs to be focused on the most by division housing groups and Housing and Residential Life to improve the residential experience for all.

- One challenge for division and theme housing is the one-point loss system for sophomores. Many students have complained about this. The procedures in place are confusing to most since it is a very detailed system which has many qualifiers.

### **III. Beneficiaries of Theme Housing**

**[The original report included a list of all students who had benefited from Theme and Division Housing. The list has been omitted from the committee's report]**

### **V. Approved Theme Housing for 2011-2012 (applications available upon request)**

#### **A. Buddhist House**

##### Programs

- Weekly meditations
- Quarterly meals at midterms and finals
- Ongoing sutra readings and discussions
- Ongoing lecturers

##### Committee feedback

- Contact Liz Keeney, the Director of the Board of Spiritual and Religious Life and utilize the meditation space on campus for some of your events as well.
- Apply with the Student Activities Office to be a recognized student group by the end of the Spring 2010-2011 academic year.

#### **B. ISAK- International Society at Kenyon**

##### Programs

- Monthly art displays
- Monthly cultural evenings with poetry readings
- Ongoing international book club and library
- Multicultural party, date TBD
- Ongoing international women's group
- Ongoing writing center
- Ongoing global identity forum
- September and January- Open houses

##### Committee feedback

- Maintain active status as a student organization during the 2011-2012 academic year. Communication with the Student Activities Office will be necessary for this.
- Work with the Center for Global Engagement.

### **C. Music Education and Performance House**

#### Programs

- Monthly open microphone events
- Ongoing small performances
- Ongoing picnics
- Ongoing music swap events and songwriting circles
- Ongoing DJ workshops

#### Committee feedback

- Connect with a cappella groups, student bands, and play a role in the Battle of the Bands event that happens each semester.
- Apply with the Student Activities Office to be a recognized student group by the end of the Spring 2010-2011 academic year.

### **D. ECO/PEAS**

#### Programs

- August/September- FreeStore and sustainability meeting
- October- Oktoberfest, PEAS local food brunch, Canning workshops; Reading Days trip
- November/December- Get to know your campus symposium, yogurt making workshop, open dinner
- January- panel, discussion
- February- raccoon dinner, conference
- March- Get to know your campus symposium part II, local foods brunch
- April- Week of sustainability, keynote speaker

#### Committee feedback

- Maintain active status as student organizations during the 2011-2012 academic year. Communication with the Student Activities Office will be necessary for this.
- Connect with the Food Co-op for shared programming.

### **E. Kenyon College Food Cooperative**

#### Programs

- Monthly open meals
- Ongoing movie nights
- September- Meet the Greens event
- Weekly small group meals

#### Committee feedback

- Assist with the Amnesty Hunger Banquet

- Do a cooking lesson with AVI
- Connect with PEAS/ECO for shared programming
- Maintain active status as a student organization during the 2011-2012 academic year.

**F. KAC Heads (Conditional approval, must meet the following requirements to obtain and keep housing)**

Requirements

- Change two of the members of the house to students who are not involved with the football team (videographer, trainer, assistant) or play on the team. These students can be involved in other sports, but not football.
- Clean your property every Sunday for the rest of this year and next. No trash, beer cans, or furniture should be scattered in the lawn.

Programs

- Monthly barbeques, dates TBD
- Weekly study tables on Mondays
- Ongoing athletic supporters hotline
- Youth baseball/softball clinic in December
- Pink Zone and Whiteout games in February
- Relay for Life in April
- Wiffle ball day, date TBD

Committee Feedback

- Maintain active status as a student organization during the 2011-2012 academic year. Communication with the Student Activities Office will be necessary for this.

**VI. Theme and Division Housing GPA Report**

A. Fall Semester 2010

|             |      |            |      |           |      | Current |      | Approved |      |
|-------------|------|------------|------|-----------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
| All College | 3.37 | Greek Life | 3.36 | Non-Greek | 3.37 | Theme   | 3.33 | Theme    | 3.44 |
| All Women   | 3.44 | Sorority   | 3.47 | Women     | 3.43 | Women   | 3.47 | Women    | 3.48 |
| All Men     | 3.29 | Fraternity | 3.25 | Men       | 3.30 | Men     | 3.21 | Men      | 3.42 |

B. Cumulative

|             |      |            |      |           |      | Current |      | Approved |      |
|-------------|------|------------|------|-----------|------|---------|------|----------|------|
| All College | 3.35 | Greek Life | 3.29 | Non-Greek | 3.37 | Theme   | 3.24 | Theme    | 3.35 |
| All Women   | 3.42 | Sorority   | 3.40 | Women     | 3.43 | Women   | 3.37 | Women    | 3.40 |
| All Men     | 3.27 | Fraternity | 3.18 | Men       | 3.31 | Men     | 3.12 | Men      | 3.30 |

These GPAs are courtesy of the Office of the Registrar.

## VII. Damage charges for Division Housing

In general, there are few differences in yearly *room* damages between division housing group members and the rest of the student population. However, there are extremes in both groups. There have been incidents in both division housing and non-division housing in which students are charged a very large amount of money because of any of the following reasons: improper check-out, unreturned key(s), excessive cleaning needed, unbanked/unlofted bed, item removal fee, damages to property (such as to furniture or to walls), furniture replacement, or wall patch or painting needed. When students in division housing areas are assessed large charges, it is disappointing because it often demonstrates a lack of respect of the space or the division housing system.

Differences in damage charges exist between division housing group members and the rest of the student population with regards to *non-room areas*. Lounge areas, bathrooms, hallways, or other shared or common space areas in non-division areas are not as weathered, vandalized, or otherwise in need of attention as compared to their counterparts in division housing areas. The common sentiment shared by division housing group members when there is damage in a hallway, for instance, is that the group's members love the space and would not do it - it was done by non-members. Many times vandalism happens during parties or impromptu gatherings. Housing and Residential Life stresses accountability and responsibility - communicating that expectations regarding the behavior of guests in the space should be clearly stated, upheld, and enforced. Many times there is no one that is ever named as being the individual responsible for damage. For example, a group may have frequent destruction or theft of hallway ceiling tiles (which have to be replaced) but claims that it is random party-goers that are responsible for doing this (and they do not know specifics). There are incidents of people urinating in hallways or on doors, paper towels being stuffed in sink drains and water being blasted to flood the floor and hallways, vomit on stairwells, and hall or door decorations ripped down.

Another common excuse is that the vandalism was caused either as a practical joke (perhaps taken too far) or maliciously (by a rival student or group). "Why would we pee in our own hallway?" a group may ask. This may be a good point, and the individual may be correct. Or, someone from the hall may have been very intoxicated and unaware of his surroundings. We may never know the truth behind most damages which are done in residential areas. Regardless, division housing (non-room) areas are more likely to be damaged.

### Appendix Three: Residential Learning Objectives

[Prepared by the Office of Residential Life]

[Why we have a residential life program](#)

A residential college adds significantly to the education of students when it provides the opportunity for distinctive and dynamic learning communities to develop. We believe that these learning communities are present within our residential program. In such communities, students are encouraged, both directly and indirectly, to engage actively in the quest for knowledge both inside and outside the classroom and to take responsibility for themselves and their community. They are challenged to grow personally by constant contact with new experiences and different ways of viewing the world. Simultaneously, they are supported and encouraged by friends, faculty, staff, and other community members and find opportunities for spontaneous as well as structured activities. Such a community promotes the intellectual and personal growth of individuals and encourages mutual understanding and respect in the context of diversity.

A learning community has a distinctive set of values and qualities which support individual growth and development. These values emerge from and reinforce the finest traditions and heritage of Kenyon College. By maintaining rich relationships with the world beyond, the College prepares students for engagement in the local, national and international communities and connects them with the larger Kenyon family.

#### Values of a Residential Learning Community

- Engagement in active learning and inquiry - Such a community is characterized by a lively intellectual life of inquiry, discussion, debate, and respectful disagreement; vigorous pursuit of knowledge and understanding both independently and collaboratively; the highest standards of honesty; and celebration of the arts through creation, performance, and appreciation.
- Challenge and growth - A residential community brings together people of varying experiences, values, beliefs, and interests in the recognition that much learning and personal growth come through the creative friction created in contact with difference. Such a community also encourages its members to develop their own interests and talents as individuals and together in groups and provides opportunities for leadership and collaboration.
- Freedom of inquiry and expression - A residential learning community encourages free expression of widely varying views; it challenges assumptions and values.
- Mutual respect and civility - In a residential learning community differences are prized and respected and disagreement is not meant or understood as personal animosity.
- Concern for others - In a residential learning community, members care about their neighbors, encourage their achievements, and support them when they need assistance.
- Shared responsibility for the community - A residential learning community requires honesty, high integrity, and personal responsibility of its members and expects that they will hold one another accountable for living up to these values. Members of such a community learn to collaborate with one another in solving community problems.
- Friendship and fun - In a residential learning community members find close and life-long friends, relax together, meet new people, and enjoy life. Active and varied athletic, recreational, and social activities provide a context for healthy fun, as do the spontaneous activities of students.
- Connection to the larger community – A residential learning community thrives in its relative isolation from the immediate demands and commitments of the world, but cannot accomplish its mission without meaningful connections that link it to that world outside. Learning is enriched through bonds between alumni, parents, and the College, through voluntary social

service and political and social action that teach students by engaging them in the world, through appropriate opportunities to study in other settings, and through a lively parade of visitors to campus to share talents, views, and experiences.

- Commitment to serving the common good outside as well as within the College - The residential learning community to which we aspire at Kenyon College values and supports the activities of its members which contribute to the quality of life at the College, in Gambier/Mt Vernon, in Ohio, and in the world beyond. The community offers opportunities to serve and celebrates the work of those who do so.
- Affirmation of Kenyon's history and its finest traditions - In residential learning communities at Kenyon, members join together in solemn ceremonies such as Convocation and Commencement; at celebratory events such as Homecoming and Family Weekend; in myriad other recurrent events that remind the community members of their connections to one another and to the past and future of their College.

### Positive outcomes we anticipate will accrue to our student residents as a result of their residential experience

- Involvement and Satisfaction

Residential living during college is consistently one of the most important determinants of a student's level of involvement or integration into the various cultural, social, and extracurricular systems of an institution. Compared to their counterparts who live at home and commute to college, resident students have significantly more social interaction with peers and faculty and are significantly more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities and to use campus facilities. Given resident students' greater social and extracurricular involvement, it is not surprising that residents, as compared to their commuter counterparts, have different perceptions of the social climate at the institution and express different levels of satisfaction with the college.

- Persistence and Graduation

A large body of evidence underscored the importance of social integration during college as a significant determinant of persistence and graduation. Students who live in residence halls consistently persist and graduate at significantly higher rates than students who have not had this experience. Residential living seems to provide an additional advantage for students who begin college with individual attributes that make them more likely to succeed.

- Personal Growth and Development

Although the evidence is not unequivocal, students living in traditional residence halls tend to make significantly greater positive gains in a number of areas of psychosocial development than their counterparts who reside off campus and commute to college. These greater gains are in autonomy and inner-directedness, intellectual orientation, and academic and social self concepts. Students living in residence halls also show higher levels of self-esteem over time, greater growth in ego development, and greater reductions in authoritarianism.

- Values, Attitudes, and Moral Judgment

The evidence suggests that students living on campus may experience somewhat greater value changes than their counterparts who live off campus and commute to college. The strong evidence is in the areas of aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual values, social and political liberalism and secularism. In all three areas, students living in college residence halls tend to make significantly larger gains than their commuter counterparts.

- Academic Performance

A large body of evidence has addressed the question of whether students who live in residence halls perform better academically (that is, earn higher grades) than those who live at home and commute to college. The existing evidence on this question is mixed. Blimling (1989) found that after controlling for differences in past academic performance, living in a college residence hall provided neither an advantage nor a disadvantage in academic performance compared to living at home and commuting to college.

### Kenyon College's Community Learning Objectives

- Consciousness of Self - Students will gain insight into the beliefs, attitudes, and emotions that guide their experience, ultimately motivating them to develop a consciousness of others.
- Congruence - Students will gain self-awareness in order to align their values and actions and identify their own areas of strength and limitation.
- Commitment - Students will discover how to channel their passion, intensity, and longevity into their experience in order to be the most effective personally and collectively.
- Collaboration - Students will learn how to identify needs, explore differences, and discuss relational styles in order to transcend individual goals, interests, and behaviors.
- Common Purpose - Students will help to build, establish and belong to successful, thriving communities based around shared goals and values.
- Controversy with Civility - Students will practice using healthy communication patterns with open and honest dialogue whereby trust is developed.
- Citizenship - Students will engage in their communities and model the way for their fellow students.

### Specific program elements that lead to the realization of these positive outcomes:

- Community Advisor Program: training, low ratio (20 to 1) with first-year students
- First-Year Students living together
- Theme Housing (workshops, application process, requirements, review, advisor program, etc.)
- One-on-One interactions
- Passive programming (Bulletin boards, posters, decorations)
- Programming (Community Boosters): social events and activities
- Programming (Educational): alcohol awareness week, diversity awareness week, disability awareness week, safety awareness week, etc.
- Programming (Community Service)
- First Year Experience; first semester subject series
- Roommate Contracts/Mediation Process
- Health and Safety Inspections
- Facilities Inspections
- Matriculation

- Community Adviser Duty
- Dean On Duty activities
- Judicial cases
- Accessibility issues
- Maintenance (furniture, lounges, kitchens, common areas, long term planning, etc.)
- First- Year room-mate pairing process
- Housing Lottery
- Break Housing for students (Break Housing duty coverage and break housing programming)
- International student programming
- Assistant Directors (training, selection, supervision, advising, etc.)
- Housing and Dining Committee
- Dining Services collaboration
- Students of Concern collaboration
- First-Year Council
- Deans Advisory Council
- Division Housing: working with Greeks and other division housing groups
- Community contracting process, discussion and practice.