



Lehigh University Student Senate XXXI  
November 6th, 2018

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Sponsors: Charlie Williams, Co-Chair of Facilities and Services,  
Hank Portney, Co-Chair of Facilities and Services,  
Zach Vinik, President,  
Evan Chanksy, Vice President  
Allison Connors, Senator  
Casey Zhong, Senator  
Jenna Perricelli, Senator  
Noah Gibson, Senator  
Matthew Gunton, Senator

**SSR31FS001**

**Whereas**, Lehigh University has resolved many recent student concerns around housing for upperclass students;

**Whereas**, The recent events have revealed long-standing issues surrounding student housing, specifically off-campus housing;

**Whereas**, As part of Lehigh's commitment to Path to Prominence the state of student housing must be improved through broader means than solely constructing new housing facilities;

**Whereas**, There is currently little oversight or support network for students considering off-campus housing;

**Whereas**, There are no safeguards or support networks for students with issues while living off-campus;

**Whereas**, There are unaddressed issues regarding housing security for low income and international upperclass students;

**Whereas**, There is no administrative verification that all students have secured housing on or off campus;

**Whereas**, There are no well known and up to date university resources to identify verified landlords;

**Whereas**, Off-campus housing does not provide the same resources for the safety and wellbeing of the residents as on campus does;

**Whereas,** Leases are legally binding, and force students who may find themselves in unsafe or unhealthy situations to continue to live there;

**Whereas,** There is poor university coordination with Bethlehem to ensure the fair treatment of students and full-time residents;

**Whereas,** There exists a culture of signing leases for off-campus housing excessively far in advance, which could be a detriment to students;

**Whereas,** The Lehigh student body will experience an inherent class divide due to the significantly higher costs of SouthSide Commons;

**Whereas,** Students have reported many cases of poor university maintenance in residence halls across campus, such as mold, general disrepair and a lack of inspection of elevators;

**Whereas,** It is generally more difficult for students planning to participate in international programs, semesters abroad, or a ninth semester to find single semester housing off-campus;

**Whereas,** Lehigh University's financial aid does not cover all expenses to the student experience, such as food during academic breaks, club activities, and deposits for off-campus housing;

**Be it Resolved,** Student Senate requests that the following student-developed solutions be considered, researched, and if viable, implemented. If these solutions are not viable, Student Senate requests an explanation be provided for the denial of each individual proposal;

**Be It Further Resolved,** The Student Senate acknowledges that the following are all recommendations, and thus we request that Lehigh convene the chairs of the following offices / departments for a joint discussion with a group of Student Senators:

- Office of Residence Life
- Housing Services
- Office of Financial Aid
- Student Affairs Office

**Be it Further Resolved,** Lehigh University should implement the following solutions to assure individual's financial situations do not detract from their student experience:

- Give a housing lottery advantage to those with the financial aid to support Category I housing, allowing them to pick the options they can afford;
- Create a system to assist students in navigating food security and off-campus housing issues based on the specifics of their financial situation;

- Create a system for the University to prevent students from having to transfer only because of housing or financial related issues;
- Pledge to not allow socioeconomic class divides to be established by the price of housing options, notably SouthSide Commons;
- Pledge to not allow an individual's financial situation to prevent them from participating in campus events and opportunities;
- Expand the reach of the student opportunity fund;
- In a timely manner, provide the updates to the housing categories that are being planned;

**Be it Further Resolved,** Lehigh should implement the following solutions to assure that the continued execution of the Path to Prominence aligns with Lehigh's commitment to improving the student experience and improving our community as a whole:

- Pledge to send information about any changes to housing policies at least 15 months before the change takes effect;
- Recognize and clearly affirm that the experience of any one student year should not be significantly hampered or degraded for the completion of larger university expansion goals;
- Update messaging related to housing with the recognition that students and parents are paying customers of the university and thus their shared concerns are of the highest importance, above university expansion;
- Pledge to do everything within its power to place students in registered, recently inspected, and up-to-code housing whether on or off campus;
- Pledge to align housing changes with an overall objective of improving South Bethlehem, not only for students but for local residents as well;
- Provide equivalent upgrades and expansions to other student facilities in line with the housing expansion, including dining and athletic facilities;
- Pledge to promote SouthSide Commons with equal frequency as less expensive on-campus housing facilities;

**Be it Further Resolved,** The Student Senate asks that Lehigh create a new office for off-campus student housing comparable to other peer universities. This office would have the following responsibilities:

- Actively work with students whose lottery number was too low to get on campus housing to secure off campus alternatives;
- Create an online system detached from Facebook and other social media to find roommates for one or both semesters, allowing ninth semester students and those seeking abroad opportunities to find living situations;
- Create a network of recommended or approved landlords;
- Create a network of off-campus "RAs" that provide guidance and support, but not policy enforcement;
- Provide resources to help with landlord disputes;
- Provide resources to understand and utilize tenant law;

- Provide resources for international students to navigate local legal documents, contracts, money, banking, etc;
- Provide resources for low-income students to petition for more aid for housing if necessary;
- Provide housing security for students applying for campus commitments that have accompanying housing accommodations (including Gryphoning, Greek Life, International experiences, etc.);
- Design and implement a ‘worst case scenario’ solution for housing overflow that could mimic the University of Tampa’s relocation of overflow students up to a nearby hotel with buses to campus, or mimic Lafayette’s solution with mobile, temporary housing;

**Be it Further Resolved,** a copy of this resolution will be sent to the following Lehigh administrators:

- Ric Hall, Vice Provost: Student Affairs
- Pat Johnson, Vice President of Finance
- Brent Stringfellow, University Architect
- Dan Warner, Vice Provost: Admissions and Financial Aid
- Katherine Lavinder, Dean of Students
- David Joseph, Executive Director: Student Auxiliary Services
- Ozzie Breiner, Director: Housing Services
- Keith Blankenship, Assistant Dean & Director of Residence Life.