Creating a Universal Residential Experience:
The Report of the Undergraduate Residential Experience Committee
January 18, 2018
Creating a Universal Residential Experience
TIMELINE OF NORTHWESTERN’S RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

1969 - A Community of Scholars (often referred to as “The Hagstrum Report”) is released, laying the groundwork for development of Northwestern’s residential experience with a call for greater attention to “students’ life and education outside the classroom.”

1972 - The University Committee on Residential Colleges proposes the establishment of residential colleges, with the first residential colleges started shortly thereafter and more opening over the next several years.

2009 - The Master Plan for Creating a New Northwestern Residential Experience (often referred to as “The Biddison Hier Report”) is published; it includes recommendations around integrated learning, campus community, and intentional design of spaces.

2010 - The Elder Residential Community Program Planning Group outlines the contours of “residential communities,” the newest addition to Northwestern’s residential experience distinguished by Faculty-in-Residence.

2011 - Patricia Telles-Irvin becomes Vice President for Student Affairs.

2013 - The Housing Master Plan is initiated with the demolition of Peanut Row on the 500-block of Lincoln to make room for a new Residential Services building.

2014-15 - North Mid-Quads and South Mid-Quads Residence Halls are renovated.

2015-16 - 1838 Chicago Residence Hall, Goodrich House, and Shepard Hall are renovated.
Construction of 560 Lincoln Street Residence Hall begins.

2016-17 - Willard Hall is renovated.
Fall 2017 - 560 Lincoln Street Residence Hall opens. Jones Residence Hall closes for renovation. The two-year residency requirement takes effect for students matriculating in fall 2017. A new open-access meal plan allows all residential students to come and go from dining halls without restriction.


2017-18 - Residential colleges, residential communities, and traditional residence halls continue to operate as usual. Working groups are convened to determine how to implement this report’s recommendations. Input from students, faculty, and staff continue to shape the process.

2018-19 - The report’s recommendations may begin to affect residential colleges, residential communities, and traditional residence halls. Greek housing begins to count toward the two-year residency requirement.

2021 - Jones Residence Hall reopens along with a new Residential Services building at 1830 Sheridan Road.

2022 - Foster-Walker is renovated.

2023-24 - Bobb-McCulloch may be rebuilt or renovated depending on institutional needs.

2025 - Depending on needs, Sargent, East Fairchild, and West Fairchild may be renovated.

Note: All future projects noted on this timeline are tentative and subject to change.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL  
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
- CHARGE  
- MEMBERSHIP  
- PROCESS

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

## PREMISES

## THE NEW RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE
- OVERVIEW OF THE MODEL
- NEIGHBORHOOD FACILITIES
- NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERIENCES
- NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP

## HOUSES WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS
- THE INFLUENCE OF THE RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE PROGRAM ON HOUSES
- GREEK HOUSES AS HOUSES
- HOUSE FACILITIES
- CONTINUITY OF TRADITIONS

## RESIDENCY
- NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENCY
- HOUSING ASSIGNMENTS
- INTEGRATION OF GREEK HOUSES INTO NEIGHBORHOODS
- HOUSING DURING BREAKS
FUNDING FOR THE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE
• DUES
• FEES
• MAINTENANCE

TOPICS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION
• TERMINOLOGY
• FACULTY ROLES IN THE NEW RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE
• LINKAGE OF PEER ADVISING GROUPS INTO NEIGHBORHOODS
• ASSESSMENT
• NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERIENCES
• NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP
• HOUSES WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS
• RESIDENCY
• FUNDING FOR THE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
COMMITTEE CHARGE 77

APPENDIX B:
COMMITTEE PROCESS 78
- COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 78
- MEETING SCHEDULE 79
- SUBCOMMITTEE INFORMATION 79
- LIST OF NORTHWESTERN OFFICES AND ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED 85
- LIST OF PEER INSTITUTIONS CONSULTED 86

APPENDIX C:
SAMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD MAPS 87

APPENDIX D:
UREC PUBLICITY 92

APPENDIX E:
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT 93

APPENDIX F:
HOUSING ASSIGNMENT ALGORITHM CONCEPT 95

APPENDIX G:
COMMITTEE RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY 96
Creating a Universal Residential Experience

Executive Summary

The impetus for developing a new residential experience emerged from a desire to enrich student life at Northwestern. The University’s leadership began asking big questions, such as: Were there new ways in which living on campus could enhance the overall undergraduate experience? How could the University address current inconsistencies in students’ residential experiences? These two streams of thought—one aspirational and one corrective—merge in the single residential model proposed here. With a focus on the first two years, the new residential experience will be the only universal undergraduate experience outside of the brief window of Wildcat Welcome. By facilitating students’ transitions so they can thrive at Northwestern, living on campus will become a signature student experience that builds institutional affinity.

In the single residential model, campus will be organized into five “Neighborhoods” in which students living in a cluster of buildings will have access to common facilities, services, programming, support, and more. Due to the anticipated size of these Neighborhoods, smaller “Houses” will exist within them to give students a richer sense of home and community.

Throughout the residential experience, the University will create environments, structures, and spaces that contribute to a sense of belonging and encourage personal development. The University will closely manage Neighborhoods to ensure equity of opportunity in everything from recreational activities to academic support. Navigability of campus resources will be easier for students, who will be better able to perceive Northwestern as an institutional whole, rather than a conglomeration of disconnected parts. Houses will provide greater latitude for student agency in programming and community-building.

Finally, generations of Northwestern reports have noted the lack of acknowledgement for faculty investment in undergraduate life. In 1972, the original University Committee on Residential Colleges described student-faculty engagement as “largely a charity item in a professor’s budget, and must be subtracted from the
time and energy available for the rewarded activity of scholarship.” These words still ring true, but the success of the single residential model hinges on appropriate recognition and incentives for faculty contributions to the residential experience.

**Charge**

The Undergraduate Residential Experience Committee was convened under a charge from Dr. Patricia Telles-Irvin, Vice President of Student Affairs. The charge instructed the Committee “to develop a consistent and integrated programmatic model through residence life and academic initiatives” that will advance Northwestern’s commitment “to enhancing the sense of community, engagement, and inclusion among our undergraduate students on our campus.” The Housing Master Plan (running through 2025) and implementation of a two-year residency requirement for incoming students (beginning in Fall 2017) were presented as strategic initiatives already underway. With these bold institutional commitments, the Committee’s task was to develop a residential experience that maximizes the value to and impact on undergraduate life. The full charge is in Appendix A.

**Membership**

The Committee was a collaborative endeavor of the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of the Provost, co-chaired by the Assistant Vice President for Residential & Dining Services and the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education. Twenty-one additional members plus a staffer were drawn from faculty, staff, community stakeholders, and undergraduate students representing offices and organizations around campus. The committee roster is in Appendix B.
The Undergraduate Residential Experience Committee convened on January 28, 2016, and the full Committee met 13 times over the next 13 months; the schedule is in Appendix B. Early meetings focused on defining objectives and reviewing past university reports relevant to undergraduates’ academic and residential experiences. The Committee also examined residential models at other institutions and considered elements and features that might be adapted to meet Northwestern’s own goals. A variety of documents and handbooks were examined, and detailed phone interviews were conducted with faculty and staff at other institutions listed in Appendix B.

To root discussions in tested practices, the Committee thoroughly reviewed relevant higher education scholarship. A research library was distilled into annotated bibliographies and topical briefs, which were distributed to members for consideration. Leading scholars and practitioners were consulted to make the bibliography (see Appendix G) as comprehensive as possible in support of the Committee’s charge.

To give closer attention to domains of particular importance, four subcommittees were formed:

- **Community, Affinity, and Identity**
- **Equity of Experience**
- **Student-Faculty Interaction and Instruction**
- **Wellness, Support, and Thriving**

These subcommittees met separately and conducted interviews and focus groups with students, staff, and faculty. Appendix B includes offices and organizations that were consulted, information on the nature of each subcommittee’s work, subcommittee assignments, and summaries of subcommittee work.
Creating a Universal Residential Experience

**UNDERGRADUATE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**

**TOWN HALL MEETINGS**


All Students Welcome!

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<tr>
<td>October 3rd</td>
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<td>October 5th</td>
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<td>in the Foster-Walker Basement</td>
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<td>October 13th</td>
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<td>in Shepard Engagement Center B25</td>
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<td>October 18th</td>
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<td>in the Ayers Fishbowl Lounge</td>
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<td>October 19th</td>
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<td>October 24th</td>
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<td>in the Elder Garden-Level Lounge</td>
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<td>October 25th</td>
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<td>in the 1835 Hinman Lounge</td>
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Beyond subcommittee outreach, the Committee created a forum where every Northwestern student could hear about its work, ask questions, and provide feedback. Throughout October 2016, the Committee hosted seven town halls in residential buildings across campus where 4–5 members briefly presented emerging ideas and engaged students in dialogue. Detailed notes taken during these town halls and students’ questions and comments were passed along to the entire Committee for consideration.

The Committee made additional efforts to generate awareness about its work. A website was created upon its establishment, and content was added about research, subcommittees, and town halls. The website also included a form for submitting feedback and questions, which was shared widely. Recognizing the popularity of campus media outlets with students and alumni, the Committee invited coverage of its ongoing work. Publicity efforts are included in Appendix D.
Creating a Universal Residential Experience

For the single residential model in the Committee’s charge to validate the two-year residency requirement, students must be presented with a compelling experience with clear and substantial benefits. Early on, the Committee focused on developing a clear articulation of values and goals for the new residential experience. Some of these can be consolidated into four foundational elements, which reappear throughout the Committee’s recommendations.

**Community**

Apart from the week of Wildcat Welcome for incoming students, the single residential model presented in this report will provide the only universal undergraduate experience at Northwestern. Therefore, all students must be able to participate fully in rich and vibrant communities in their Neighborhoods and Houses. At the largest level, a stronger sense of campus-wide community should emerge from Neighborhoods and serve as a point of student pride, a foundation of identity, and a source of affinity for Northwestern. At the smallest levels, students’ Houses should provide them with a feeling of home, and offer safe and comfortable spaces to connect with a diverse group of peers from across the undergraduate schools.

Within the new residential experience, students should have equity of opportunity regardless of their school, background, or campus residence. There are currently significant qualitative differences in students’ residential experiences depending on their socio-economic status and where they live. Students will be able to achieve a fullness of experience if the University creates consistent expectations about what is available in terms of community, facilities, programs, human resources, etc. The Housing Master Plan, which is scheduled to conclude in 2025, will promote equity by modernizing and delivering more consistent living quarters while creating new kinds of spaces to enrich the residential experience. The single residential model must be guided by the principle that whatever the institution does for one student, it does for all.
Student Agency

The Committee firmly believes that students must have agency to shape their own experience or, to use the institution’s current marketing language, take their own Northwestern direction. The single residential model should ensure that students will be able to tailor their residential experience to their desires. Students will continue to have options for either suite-style or individual rooms of varying sizes, in buildings that range from fewer than 30 students to more than 400. Although the proposed model provides a framework for increasing residential delivery of services and programs, residential buildings must also provide ample space and opportunity for fun and relaxation. Students should be able to find convenient and accessible options to learn in and near their homes, yet they must not feel that these offerings intrude on spaces and times associated with play. By empowering students to take greater control of their time and supporting their efforts to do so, the Committee seeks to encourage students to use their time and space for in-depth reflections, discussions, and connections.

Care and Support

Central to the proposed model is increased and standardized residential delivery of institutional support for students’ academic growth, personal development, and emotional well-being. The Committee envisions a network of care and support that can help students as they transition from high school to college, and also prepare them to thrive as they live more independently after their second year at Northwestern. Moreover, greater integration of social, academic, and co-curricular experiences should help students navigate the many facets of their daily lives more effectively and efficiently.

The Committee believes that the new residential experience must foster behaviors that are necessary for all students to thrive, such as pursuing unfamiliar opportunities, connecting with others across difference, and reaching out for assistance. Students not only need to know where to find help, but they must also learn to identify when they need help, and must feel comfortable seeking it. Beyond equal access to institutional support, all students must also feel equally at ease utilizing
The single residential model is therefore designed to encourage a culture in which all students are both aware of, and comfortable accessing, the full range of academic, emotional, and social support systems available to them. At the same time, the University must remain responsive to evolving student needs.

**Academic Linkages**

The Committee focused on developing a flexible framework in which students can combine their academic, co-curricular, and social lives in ways that they choose. This is about much more than relocating some amount of academic activity to residential spaces; it is about the intentional integration of academic and social communities. With anticipated residence-based courses, sections, and academic support programs, students will have options to learn surrounded by friends and neighbors, which should mutually enrich academic and residential communities. Creating new opportunities for faculty to engage with students residentially will help students and faculty understand one another better, and lead to informal and valuable mentorships. By building these bridges between students’ academic and residential experiences, for students and faculty alike, some of the vitality of academic relationships within and across schools will be harnessed to enhance the residential experience.

This section outlines trends and findings that influenced the Committee’s discussions, and that lie at the heart of the proposed model. These data were drawn both from Committee research in higher education scholarship, as well as from surveys and focus groups conducted with Northwestern students.
Most scholarship about college students living on campus revolves around retention, persistence to graduation, and GPA. While these are important issues, virtually all students who matriculate at Northwestern will ultimately graduate. With little room to improve on these academic metrics, experiential considerations drove the Committee’s discussions. Students should enjoy the highest quality in both education and life while at Northwestern. Surveys of recent Northwestern alumni suggest that many feel they “survived” rather than thrived during their undergraduate years. The Committee thus focused on creating environments in which students could achieve a sense of belonging, while also enjoying easy access to services that can enhance their overall Northwestern experience.

Successfully negotiating the transition from high school is essential for students to thrive at college. At Northwestern, New Student & Family Programs plays a vital role in these transitions, primarily through the orientation week of Wildcat Welcome. The proposed residential model focuses on creating a two-year residential experience that facilitates students’ social, personal, and academic development as they enter college and prepares them to live independently when they move off campus, study abroad, or complete part of their degree program away from campus (e.g., Journalism Residency). Additionally, research has shown that students’ expectations for their college experience are powerful predictors of both their satisfaction, and their behaviors, after they arrive. By implementing a common residential experience, Northwestern will have a clear and consistent message to communicate to incoming students to help align their expectations with the opportunities and resources that await them.

Students’ academic transitions and personal development through the first and second years can best be supported through Neighborhood-based services, programs, and courses; however, the Committee neither expects nor even recommends that all university services be delivered residentially. Attempting to do so could replicate the challenge of navigability consistently reported by students and addressed explicitly in the recommendations of the 2015 Faculty Task Force on the
Undergraduate Academic Experience. Instead, focus should be on services most relevant to students’ transitions and wellness in the first two years. Moreover, the Committee does not recommend residential delivery as a replacement to centralized services such as academic support; rather, in a hub-and-spoke approach, residential offerings should be a complement and supplement by providing convenient and alternative times, locations, venues, and formats. As a collateral benefit, the Committee believes that this approach will create more common experiences across schools as colocation brings students in different academic programs into the same sections of gateway courses, the same co-curricular offerings, and more.

Universalizing the Residential Colleges

The Community, Affinity, and Identity subcommittee heard repeatedly from students that small groups are essential for forming community, and that students value active membership in multiple communities. These findings informed the layered approach to Neighborhoods and Houses, which will give students options for communities of different sizes and kinds. When discussing community formation, the Committee examined Northwestern’s existing residential models. (See Appendix E for more on this institutional context.) While each offers students
positive features, survey data showed that residential colleges deliver many positive student outcomes relative to other models. The Committee recognizes that, generally speaking, the residential colleges engender a comparatively strong sense of community and high degree of engagement that seems attributable, at least in part, to students’ sense of ownership over those entities and the various roles for affiliated faculty, staff, and graduate students. Moreover, at the Committee’s town halls many students voiced strong support for the residential colleges. Residents frequently invoked characteristics like “trust” and “community”; these sentiments are supported by data from a 2015 survey of residential students across housing models. The Committee believes that such traits should be universal within the single residential model, which is why residential colleges shaped much of the dialogue about Houses.

Although the residential colleges are not the only successful residential model, they do contain some of the strongest and closest student communities, and have attracted broad and enduring participation from faculty and staff. Ultimately, therefore, the Committee determined that the best means of fostering student communities in residential buildings was to universalize the fundamentals of the residential colleges and extended them to all Residential Services buildings. This is not the first time a university committee has recommended such a move, but it is the first time a committee has thought through the implications with a panoramic view of the overall undergraduate experience, and a mandate to consider everything from community and facilities to academic opportunities and wellness. As currently constituted and operated, the residential colleges have not realized the ambitions of the committees over the years that proposed their establishment and advocated for their growth. Significant changes will be required to reach beyond the roughly 30% of students now living in them. In addition, the University will finally need to invest the required resources, including recognition of faculty engagement. While recognizing the history and traditions of the residential college program, the Committee believes that any expansion must also account for the current campus climate and other university-wide initiatives.
Learning Across Difference

For students to learn across difference with a diverse peer group, residential settings must be safe and comfortable. Numerous studies demonstrate the developmental benefits of friendships with peers from different backgrounds. The Committee generally agreed on the benefits of populating each Neighborhood with a representative microcosm of the larger undergraduate student body. Other research pointed to the caveat that students should not feel isolated in their homes, and must be able to form affinity groups. In its campus study, the 2016 Black Student Experience Task Force highlights multiple themes from the wider research pertaining to African American/Black students’ sense of isolation and depletion as “being the only one’ in multiple campus settings day in and day out.” The Committee does not want to replicate this in the residential context, which should foster a sense of belonging for all students. Achieving the right balance of creating opportunities to learn across difference and ensuring that students with marginalized identities and backgrounds can form networks will require additional attention from the institution and further input from students.

Student-Faculty Contact

Interactions between faculty and students outside the classroom have been shown to lead to significant benefits for both. This engagement leads to a reciprocal humanizing in which both students and faculty come to understand one another better in ways that align with the Student Affairs Divisional Strategic Plan. Students begin to see faculty as approachable and come to view the larger university as an integrated learning environment. Faculty, in turn, gain new perspectives on students that improve their teaching and mentoring while developing a deeper commitment to the institution. Critically, these interactions need not be academic or intellectual. Generations of students have established informal yet deeply rewarding personal mentorships with residential college fellows, and the comparatively new Faculty-in-Residence have established popular traditions and programs that focus entirely on fun and wellness. In the new residential experience, access to such opportunities must be expanded to include every student on campus, and a larger number of faculty and staff must be incorporated as well.
To create the conditions in which student-faculty contact can flourish, the University must signal to faculty the high value it places on time spent with undergraduate students. The 2015 Faculty Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience proposed a currency of Continuing Higher Education Credits (CHECs) that faculty could earn for a range of auxiliary pursuits related to their teaching and mentoring of undergraduates. With the two-year residency requirement, students’ residential experience will become more integrated with their sense of their overall undergraduate education. The University should embrace this prediction and ensure that faculty capacity to participate and contribute is not a limiting factor in the success of the single residential model.
A prominent theme in higher education scholarship has been the value in forging new and stronger collaborations between units in academic affairs and student affairs. As the Housing Master Plan introduces physical spaces on campus, the new residential experience will be a new figurative space for partnership between the Office of the Provost, the undergraduate schools, and the Division of Student Affairs. While reaffirming the existing network of support and care, the Committee encourages more attention to and resources for collaboration to support students fully as they develop personally and intellectually as autonomous and responsible young adults. The single residential model cannot succeed with Residential Services alone; it will require all units to adjust how they go about contributing to undergraduate education and student learning in the first two years. Northwestern is poised to be a leader in this area if it takes advantage of the convergence of the Housing Master Plan, two-year residency requirement, and new residential experience to address the cultural and epistemological barriers to full partnership across academic and student affairs throughout higher education. There is scholarly and practitioner-based research on this complex subject, and the University can infuse its structures and working relationships to truly unify efforts to support undergraduate students.
Overview of the Model

The Committee recommends a single residential model in which campus is organized into Neighborhoods that include clusters of Residential Services buildings and Greek houses. At the Neighborhood level, students will have access to common facilities, services, programming, support, traditions, and more. With 700-1,100 students per Neighborhood, the desired distribution of facilities across Neighborhoods is feasible within the parameters of the Housing Master Plan. The combination of facilities and population in each Neighborhood will justify and allow for residential delivery of support resources, academic opportunities, and programs. Perhaps most importantly, the Neighborhood will provide students with an intermediate layer of care and community between the building in which they live and the entirety of campus. That said, the Committee strongly believes from deliberations and subcommittee work that community is best built at a much smaller level, with suggestions ranging from 75-150 students as the optimal size. The Committee has used the term “Houses” to describe these more intimate units, which would be largely independent in terms of identity and programs while linking up to the robust resources of the Neighborhoods in which they are located. Within Houses, students will be part of a community characterized by a sense of home and trust.
Why Not Just Add More Residential Colleges?

The single residential model will require changes to the residential college program as currently constituted. While structured opportunities for students to organize around shared interests will persist, the Board of Trustees strongly supported the notion that units within the single residential model should not carry permanent themes. Also, in the context of a two-year residency requirement, the University cannot expect incoming students to apply for competitive housing, or to relocate returning students for lack of participation; either scenario would perpetuate a sense of winners and losers in the housing assignments process, which would potentially generate negativity around the residential experience even before matriculation. This concern relates to the broader issue of equity, which is a high priority with the implementation of a single residential model. Although student leaders in Houses will continue to manage budgets for their programming and social activities along the lines of today’s executive boards, students can no longer set dues for themselves or their peers, which can lead to different housing costs.

There is also a matter of scaling up a program that currently includes approximately 30% of the undergraduate residential population. For example, there are more than 200 fellows (faculty and staff) affiliated with the eleven residential colleges, which could not be sustained given the number of Houses required to span all of campus. Moreover, the single residential model will include features that the residential colleges were not designed for, such as standardized integration of academic support and residence-based teaching. Although the latter currently exists in some form, it is neither as robust nor as consistent as envisioned in the single residential model.

The single residential model has been developed with the fundamentals of the residential colleges in mind. The Neighborhood superstructure will alleviate some of the burdens currently faced by the residential colleges, while the proposal for Houses will carry forward core elements of the residential colleges.
Why Not a First-Year Neighborhood?

Some universities place all first-year students in one area of campus, a housing approach often accompanied by an intensive “first-year experience” program and amenities exclusive to that population (e.g., dining hall, student commons). At Northwestern, this would have reinforced the north-south campus divide in students’ collective psychology. Furthermore, some Greek houses would have become islands in a first-year Neighborhood designed, staffed, and programmed to meet the needs of students who were not living in or even affiliated with them.

Instead, the Committee developed a neighborhood concept that mixes together students of different class years and intentionally integrates residents of Greek houses. Approaching Greek houses as Houses within Neighborhoods also seemed philosophically appropriate as a condition of counting toward students’ fulfillment of the two-year residency requirement. Practically, a first-year experience followed by an independent second-year experience would not have generated a sense of continuity of community and persistence of identity that would outlast the two years of living on campus. Indeed, there would have been lost opportunities for mentorship by second-year students, who would be mostly sequestered on another part of campus. Moreover, the logistics of maintaining discrete first- and second-year residential experiences would require housing students in different parts of campus for each year of the residency requirement, which would require them to learn a whole new set of Neighborhood resources and facilities, and diminish the sense of home and community to be cultivated within Houses.
Neighborhood Facilities

A core premise of the neighborhood concept is that residential students should have access to certain facilities and services located near where they live. Each Neighborhood will have a unique distribution of facilities due to its precise mix of inherited architecture for renovations and available footprints for new construction. Some Neighborhoods may have facilities that are fairly consolidated while others will have them more evenly balanced. Appendix C contains sample Neighborhood maps with possible locations of facilities. The Committee recommends that each Neighborhood have the following:

1. A dining outlet in which students can have meals as part of their board plan and connect with peers, staff, and faculty. Communal dining is important for community building. A dining venue can be a focal point of Neighborhood life with distinct
design elements, food services, decorations, and more, to reinforce students' identification with the Neighborhood. The Houses in a given Neighborhood should be able to reserve rooms or tables for regular gatherings to supplement events and informal interactions in their own spaces. Dining will thus be one way of linking Houses to their larger Neighborhood.

2. A collaboration space in which students can do academic work, develop a business plan, write a play, or simply hang out alone or together. These spaces should incorporate design principles similar to those that shape The Garage, and should be informed by recent research into how spaces can influence learning. With areas for both large and small group collaborations, as well as individual work, these spaces should have furniture that is easily reconfigurable, as well as technology and equipment to facilitate cooperative efforts.

3. A fitness room in which students can exercise in a low-key environment with high-quality equipment and features that allow for various forms of exercise. The size and equipment in each Neighborhood may vary depending on proximity to campus-wide athletic and recreation centers.
4. A multi-functional space with moveable furniture that can be reconfigured for a variety of social and educational purposes, including equipment to host amateur theatrical, musical, and dance productions. Northwestern students bring a range of interests and hobbies that may not appear on their transcripts or resumes. Many crave creative outlets and access to spaces when they are not enrolled in a specialized academic program or are not members of a student performing arts group. Residential spaces can serve the dual goals of individual recreation and community building around productions and performances.
5. Faculty-in-Residence apartments (1-2 per Neighborhood) in which students can interact informally with a live-in faculty member and invited guests. This recommendation is based in part on the experiential and programmatic successes associated with the four apartments included in the residential community model established after the 2008 Master Plan for Creating a New Northwestern Residential Experience (often referred to as the Biddison Hier Report). It is a mutually powerful experience for students and faculty to live in the same buildings, eat in the same dining spaces, and engage in non-evaluative contexts.

6. Classrooms in which students can opt to enroll in courses or sections and attend academic support programs or meetings. These rooms will be in parts of buildings that are sufficiently removed from social spaces, lounges, and bedrooms to ensure students do not feel that schoolwork is following them home. Enrollment would neither be required of nor restricted to residents of a Neighborhood so students will have the choice of prioritizing times over locations. Still, the Committee anticipates that many students will elect to take courses with neighbors, which might lead to informal study groups, meals together, and friendships in the context of the residential experience.
7. An operations desk staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to support students with everything from lockouts to equipment checkout. To reinforce the residential model in which students will live, Residential Services should relocate various services to Neighborhood operations desks staffed by personnel who can fulfill a range of requests on the spot and respond to various inquiries (e.g., maintenance issues, room changes) by way of direct follow-up or informed referral.

8. A mailroom in which students can pick up their first-class mail. The consolidation of this service in a bustling Neighborhood location will make it easier for students to check multiple items off their to-do list with one stop. In addition, students will be more likely to see and be seen by neighbors during their daily routines, reinforcing the sense of community.

9. An intra-campus shuttle stop at which students can catch a ride to other Neighborhoods’ stops and key campus destinations. While Northwestern’s campus is not big compared to some peer institutions, research shows that student perceptions differ. A shuttle will make it easier for students to manage their schedules and come and go from their residences (and activities within them) and campus-wide commitments like classes, jobs, and student organizations. As a collateral benefit, this shuttle will contribute to campus community by making destinations like the University Commons seem more convenient.
Four general principles for designing and utilizing Neighborhood spaces will support the goals of distributing facilities across Neighborhoods and maximizing student access to and use of these facilities:

1. **Neighborhood facilities should allow for special uses without being overly specialized.** They should complement, rather than compete with, campus facilities by encouraging students to dabble or cultivate an interest that might lead them to more specialized campus facilities. Students should feel that they belong in all Neighborhood spaces and do not need training or expertise to use them; specialized facilities may limit students’ connections across differences of interest or academic program.

2. **Neighborhood facilities should prioritize adaptable, multi-functional spaces given the diversity of activities students enjoy.** The design of some spaces will require a balance between ensuring that the instructional environment meets faculty expectations, and that students feel they have permission to “play” in that room at a different time of day. A room that holds a class meeting in the morning should be able to host a theatre rehearsal in the afternoon and a yoga session in the evening.

3. **Neighborhood spaces should be available for reservation by residential student groups (whether Houses or groups formed at the Neighborhood level).** The reservation process should be easy and transparent to create the sense that these spaces are part of students’ extended campus homes and that they can enjoy them for recreational and extra-curricular pursuits that enrich their time at Northwestern.

4. **As the Housing Master Plan proceeds, norms should be established for use of Neighborhood spaces.** While some spaces will be open to anyone (e.g., dining outlets), restricting access to others will ensure that residents can freely use their Neighborhood’s facilities and amenities, especially those in high demand. As students’ use of facilities often depends on their ability to reconcile a crowded schedule with their location, restrictions could be set by time of day and the degree of access may vary based on the kind of facility.
In their first two years at Northwestern, students will come to think of their Neighborhood as an integrative hub for their social and academic lives. As described above, Neighborhoods will be large enough for students to have ongoing opportunities to meet new people, while at the same time increasing the likelihood that students are always around a critical mass of friendly, familiar faces.

The intentionality behind the neighborhood concept extends to the Committee’s recommendation that the residential experience not be over-programmed. Students need to step away from what the 1988 Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience diagnosed as “an extremely ‘busy’ curriculum” that “creates an intense though not reflective learning experience.” More than a quarter century later, students and faculty told the 2015 Faculty Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience about “extreme busy-ness” and the need for “mechanisms by which students and faculty alike can reserve time for meaningful synthesis and shared reflection.” The goal should be a reasonable slate of opportunities and resources that is student-centered and constantly evolving to respond to new conditions.

Activities

Given the anticipated scale of the Neighborhoods, the Committee imagines a range of social, cultural, and extracurricular experiences that could be organized residentially:

- Outings would provide students with occasions to enjoy events around campus and in the city accompanied by friends and acquaintances. Neighborhood outings could be organized to cultural events at the Arts Circle and to athletic competitions (including those featuring Northwestern or Chicago’s professional teams). There may also be benefits in organizing Neighborhood tours and introductions to various campus facilities through Neighborhoods (e.g., to Henry Crown Sports Pavilion or the University Library).
• Relationships could be established between Neighborhoods and Evanston city wards or school districts. Groups could travel to city locations by foot or pre-arranged transportation from a Neighborhood’s intra-campus shuttle stop. Additionally, events for community organizations could be held in Neighborhood spaces. Such relationships would facilitate students’ engagement in the local community and the development of Neighborhood-based philanthropy projects.
• Neighborhood-based events could provide students with more (and potentially more satisfying) opportunities to participate in campus-wide events or programs. For example, a One Book One Northwestern event held in a Neighborhood venue would link students’ residential experiences to this signature university series.

• Neighborhood-based traditions and ceremonies would link students’ residential experience to notable phases in their college careers. For example, at March through the Arch, students could assemble by Neighborhood and be led by members of the Neighborhood leadership carrying the flag or banner representing the community. Additionally, affinity could be maintained at homecoming by organizing alumni receptions through Neighborhood affiliation, as well as floats and banners for the parade. Events to celebrate matriculation, graduation, etc. could supplement existing ceremonies in smaller and more personal settings.

While boundaries between Neighborhoods are inherent in the development of Neighborhood experiences, these boundaries will be permeable when appropriate. In addition to creating opportunities for shared Neighborhood experiences, opportunities must also exist for interaction both beyond and between Neighborhoods. For example, an outdoor music festival could be a joint enterprise between two nearby Neighborhoods.
Support

Residence-based support that supplements existing centralized resources will increase accessibility for students and ease the two main navigation challenges cited by the 2015 Faculty Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience: “First, not all the constituents for whom any service was developed are aware of its existence, and second, gaining access to the service is frequently hampered by inadequate communication or complexities of accessibility and/or administration.” If awareness and first contacts occur in the residential context, then students will be more likely to engage with the centralized resource based on a referral by the residential representative or by self-motivation and direction.

The neighborhood concept addresses many goals for the undergraduate experience that have been articulated over the last half century, including easing the navigability of resources across the modern research university, helping students find community, and organizing students’ transitions to Northwestern. Some possibilities for support and learning include:
• Residence-based instruction offered within each Neighborhood would provide students with more conveniently-located classes and sections, and make it easier for students to form study groups with their peers who live nearby. Such instruction would neither be mandatory for a Neighborhood’s residents nor closed to residents of other Neighborhoods, though many students will likely realize the benefits and vote with their feet.
• Academic support is an institutional priority for ensuring that all students have the resources necessary to pursue their intended plan of study. While the primary responsibility falls with departments within the undergraduate schools and the Searle Center for Advancing Learning & Teaching, there should be partnerships that make academic support available at different times of day, in different locations, and in different formats. With the anticipated Academic Resource Center as a hub, Neighborhood offerings can function as vital spokes in this centrally managed system.

• While support units in the Division of Student Affairs do their often-sensitive work in central offices, there are opportunities for routine drop-in hours and outreach to be hosted in Neighborhood spaces. For students who are uncertain about whether or how to access these support units, being able to meet with a representative or attend a workshop could represent an important first step toward seeking assistance.
Dining

With a dining hall in each Neighborhood, the Committee recommends that everything be done to increase access so students are more likely to come together over meals for socializing, meeting, working together, and connecting with staff and faculty. More portable and flexible meal plans may be required to meet these goals around dining, which should be central to building community.

A secondary benefit of expanded dining access is that students will no longer have the sense they are using one of a limited number of weekly meals. While socializing and relaxing over a meal is the primary goal of the dining plan, resources can be conveniently offered in dining venues designed with spaces that can be closed off for an information or review session. Currently, such events are quite successful in terms of attendance, satisfaction, and learning. For some partners, residential venues offer room set-ups to which they would not otherwise have easy access, which is another benefit of this approach. The Committee recommends standardizing such offerings as guaranteed Neighborhood experiences. This will require providing resources to units participating in such residential offerings, some of which should be offered outside of business hours to accommodate students’ schedules and catch them when they are “home.”
Neighborhood Leadership

Staff and Faculty Leadership

While physically comprised of a cluster of buildings and shared spaces, each Neighborhood will be animated by an identifiable, visible, and accessible leadership team of individuals who form a network of care and support for students. At a minimum, each Neighborhood’s team should include a Residential Life professional staff member and Faculty-in-Residence (1-2 anticipated per Neighborhood). Fortunately, positions currently exist that can be incorporated into and adapted for the Neighborhood leadership team. The Residence Director is a live-in Residential Life professional overseeing Resident Assistants, managing the larger community and individual wellness of residents in an area, and coordinating with the Dean of Students on everything from conduct issues to crisis response. In addition, the Committee sees the Faculty-in-Residence role, which is currently associated only with the four residential communities, as essential to the neighborhood concept, as it will establish linkages between students’ residential experience and their overall undergraduate education. Both the Faculty-in-Residence and the Residence Director are key positions for fostering community, as well as for ensuring that students perceive the University as an integrated whole. Faculty-in-Residence offer not only academic but also social programming, just as the Residence Directors promote learning in addition to personal development.

The Committee reached general consensus in favor of another key element of the Neighborhood leadership team. Best described as a “University Resource Adviser” (URA), this person (or people) would be a residentially-based (and thus easy to identify) first point of contact for students who need assistance identifying appropriate campus-wide resources to address their needs. A URA would perform essential triage functions, especially after hours when students may be most in need of an informed staff member, even if that individual is not the authoritative school-based academic adviser. The role was too complicated to define fully or assign to a particular unit because of the range of stakeholders in the broad endeavor of advising at Northwestern. The Committee does not recommend that a Neighborhood-based URA be part of the academic advising systems of the undergraduate schools because the residential experience is a university-wide
rather than school-based enterprise. Instead, the URA would coordinate residential delivery of various elements of institutional support, such as tutoring in the Neighborhood. The URA could manage offerings by tutors for common courses of study with review sessions and one-on-one tutoring. Aside from instructors’ office hours and the envisioned Academic Resource Center, residents would know their Neighborhood resources for each discipline, when the Neighborhood review session is, etc. URAs and any tutors or staff overseen by them would be trained by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning & Teaching for inclusive approaches to coaching and tutoring, including guidance about encouraging optimal use of all support available on campus.

Regardless of its precise composition, each Neighborhood leadership team will need support from a larger group of individuals including non-residential faculty and staff for programmatic purposes and staff for implementing elements of the neighborhood concept. The Committee also envisions student staffing at the Neighborhood level as a way to increase community-oriented employment opportunities (especially for work-study eligible students), something that could carry special appeal for juniors and seniors living off campus who want to stay immersed in the life of the Neighborhood. The number and type of non-residential faculty, staff members, and student workers would, however, ultimately depend on the size of the team and scope of its mission.

**Student Leadership**

**Student Governance**

With student agency as a foundational element of the new residential experience, the Committee recognizes the need for students to have meaningful ownership over and responsibility for their own living communities. Although the Committee discussed possibilities for constituting student governance in the single residential model, specifics should wait until further details of the Neighborhoods and Houses have been resolved. Additionally, advising of Neighborhood-level student government, or Neighborhood councils, will depend upon precise Neighborhood staffing and leadership structures. All that said, general consensus was reached on several issues pertaining to student governance:
Northwestern's residential colleges are currently represented through the Residential College Board (RCB), while the residential communities and residence halls have representation through the Residence Hall Association (RHA). The creation of a single residential model will require the unification of these two systems to preserve the best attributes of each. For example, RCB's practice of electing new executive board members to office in the spring enables these boards to plan ahead and resume activities for move-in day and Wildcat Welcome the next academic year.

The ability of the current executive and programming boards to have positive impacts on the students they represent is in no small way linked to the budgets they manage. While the details of funding are yet to be determined, the Committee affirms the importance of ensuring that ample funds be made available for student-led programming and community-building initiatives.

There will be benefits to creating a student governing body for residential students to enable coordination among Neighborhood governments as well as the Associated Student Government.

New structures for student government should be considered, as well as new prerogatives. As an example, some peer institutions empower their residential student governments to set community standards and to oversee restorative justice in cases of violations.

**Resident Assistants**
As live-in representatives of Residential Services, Resident Assistants (RAs) are an important link between students and the University’s support resources. At Northwestern, as at many universities, RAs play many roles including building community, developing programming, overseeing community standards, and more.
Some schools prefer to specialize, with RAs working alongside a variety of peer leaders who each focus on a topical area. It is likely the roles played by RAs at Northwestern will evolve as the single residential model introduces the structures of Neighborhoods and Houses for support, socializing, and community. While the details will depend on the development of the other roles to enhance the residential experience, the Committee acknowledges the significance of RAs and expects they will remain key figures.

**Neighborhood Liaisons**

The Committee recommends that various campus units have liaisons in each Neighborhood to supplement the leadership team. These liaisons will bring their areas of expertise into the residential experience and connect students with their units. Whether staff members, graduate students, or undergraduates, liaisons will be members of the Neighborhood community who will be recognized as such by residents—that is, residents will, at a minimum, know a specific individual who is their first point of contact for a unit. Liaisons may also be essential content-expert resources to members of the Neighborhood leadership team.

Currently, undergraduates fulfill an array of outreach and support roles for units. For many first-year and second-year students, initial contacts with these units, such as the Undergraduate Learning Abroad or Undergraduate Research, come through these representatives. For areas deemed of sufficiently broad interest to the residential population, these roles should be organized on a Neighborhood basis. For example, a Northwestern Career Advancement Career Ambassador could be a liaison to a Neighborhood, holding office hours in a Neighborhood space and organizing programs offered within the Neighborhood. Having students fill liaison roles will also ensure that office staff need not become overburdened by their integration into the residential experience.

In addition to enriching students’ residential experiences, liaisons could also support Neighborhood leadership teams by serving as a first-point of contact for consultations and connecting them with essential university resources. Representatives from offices like Student Assistance and Support Services (SASS)
could discuss the implications of new policies at Neighborhood leadership team meetings, help address general concerns in the community, and offer guidance on seasonal topics (like medical withdrawals) that might arise in conversation with residents.

The following are just a few illustrations of how other liaison relationships could function:

• A liaison from Leadership Development & Community Engagement could cultivate a Neighborhood’s relationship with an Evanston or Chicago organization. Events involving that organization could become a Neighborhood tradition. This would build community at the Neighborhood level and provide Houses with a ready-made occasion to join. In terms of student agency, residents could participate in one-shot volunteer events, be part of a group with a regular commitment, or link participation to a credit-bearing service-learning course based in the Neighborhood.

• A liaison from Campus Inclusion & Community could organize Neighborhood cohorts in the Sustained Dialogue program, which would simultaneously build and mutually reinforce connections within the program and the Neighborhood. In the wake of campus or national events, the liaison could also serve as a resource or convener of a community discussion. While a campus-wide forum at the University Commons may still occur, some students may prefer a more intimate venue with more familiar faces.

• A liaison from the Department of Athletics and Recreation might help arrange Neighborhood outings to Northwestern sporting events (with special attention to those involving Neighborhood residents), organize special access events to introduce Neighborhood residents to recreational facilities, and promote participation in intramural sports by Neighborhood teams. This liaison could also serve as an additional residence-based resource for student-athletes.
Possible Neighborhood Liaisons

Many units (or groupings of units) around the University could benefit from enhancing the residential experience through establishment of Neighborhood liaisons. The following list is illustrative but by no means exhaustive.

- Northwestern Career Advancement
- The Arts Circle
- Religious & Spiritual Life, clergy from affiliated religious centers
- Undergraduate Learning Abroad
- Office of Fellowships
- Office of Undergraduate Research
- International Office
- Northwestern Alumni Association
The concept of Houses is essential to the single residential model. Many goals can be achieved via intentionality at the Neighborhood level, including some measure of community that comes with seeing familiar faces in shared facilities and at common programs. However, recognizing the scale of Neighborhoods, the Committee concluded they were not ideal contexts in which most students would...
naturally find a sense of home, close friendships, and a deep sense of belonging. As described above, nestled within Neighborhoods there will be multiple Houses in which students will be able to form community with a smaller group of people amongst whom they live, and with whom they share exclusive spaces. This will ensure that Houses are a small circle of trust that feel like a smaller house within a larger Neighborhood.

In each Neighborhood, smaller Residential Services buildings and Greek houses will be standalone Houses, while larger Residential Services buildings will be divided into two or more Houses. Thus, Houses will be more intimate groupings defined in part by spaces accessible only to residents—that is, spaces that are not open to all students in the Neighborhood. At the same time, Houses will still be connected to the larger Neighborhood in various ways. For example, they will be able to reserve space in the Neighborhood dining venue for regular meals or special occasions. They will also be able to reserve Neighborhood multi-function spaces for House activities. They can even organize themselves as a block to participate in an event planned at the Neighborhood level. In terms of student governance, each House (whether based in a Residential Services building or a Greek house) could have a representative on the student Neighborhood council.

The Committee spent considerable time focused on the Neighborhoods and other aspects of the two-year residential experience that would require active management by the University. In some ways, the Houses came to be viewed as entities primarily driven by residents with support (at least in Houses in Residential Services buildings) from a small number of faculty, staff, and graduate students. This formulation aligns with the foundation of encouraging student agency and ownership of various aspects of the residential experience.

The Committee believes the University should focus its efforts on the Neighborhood level to ensure equity of opportunity and manage responsible and consistent delivery of support for students. At the House level, the Committee recommends that there be considerable latitude for experimentation by students and affiliated faculty, staff, and graduate students to develop unique programs and traditions.
Therefore, the Committee did not devote too much time to details of how Houses should be organized. The diversity of today’s residential colleges and residential communities depends on individual culture and the style of the faculty leadership. While there must be some common framework across Houses in the single residential model, the Committee anticipates that there will also be variations based on local culture and leadership, and thus wants to leave room for experimentation and development of unique programs and traditions. For example, student governance within one House could resemble an elected executive board from today’s residential colleges, while in another House it might be a smaller group of students working in less formal, collaborative relationships with the faculty or staff leadership.

**The Influence of the Residential College Program on Houses**

Perhaps the most important point about Houses is that those in Residential Services buildings represent the universalization of the fundamentals of the residential college program. At the most general level, the Committee recommends Houses in Residential Services buildings have affiliated faculty, graduate students, and/or staff to guide and participate in programming facilitated by a small cohort of students. The role of House “Head” would be akin to Faculty Chairs in the current residential colleges. Most House Heads would be live-out roles, but each Faculty-in-Residence would be the Head of a House in addition to their Neighborhood role. These faculty or staff members would help set the tone and vision for Houses. Faculty-in-Residence and the other House Heads in each Neighborhood would also then form a collegial network to collaborate on programs and develop professional and social relationships across academic specialties.

House Heads would also contribute to a Neighborhood’s network of care and support. As informal mentors in the more intimate Houses, they would be in a position to connect students to the resources of the larger Neighborhood, whether it is a referral to the University Resource Adviser or the suggestion of attendance at a Neighborhood-wide educational program.
The House Head would be supported by an “Associate Head,” a graduate student who can support the mentoring of the general population of residents and assist with facilitation of programming. In addition, the Associate Head would engage in the life of the House through meals with residents, attendance on outings, and participation in its traditions.

In addition to discussing an increase in the number of Faculty-in-Residence across campus, the Committee had multiple conversations about non-residential faculty and staff affiliations with Neighborhoods and/or Houses. While recognizing the successes of the residential college model, the Committee acknowledges a need to adapt the traditional role of fellows (formerly “Faculty Associates”) to meet the goals of the new residential experience. The Committee discussed various proposals for new models of non-residential faculty and staff involvement but was unable to reach consensus on specific contours. Non-residential faculty and staff engagement is possible at the Neighborhood and/or House level; defining the appropriate roles at both levels, however, requires a determination of how Houses are to be formed and how they relate to the Neighborhoods. Once such a framework for these positions is resolved, the University must determine appropriate compensation both as an incentive for faculty and staff engagement with students in non-evaluative contexts, and as a tangible manifestation of institutional priorities that include students’ personal and intellectual development.

Another topic was themes, which have been a characteristic of Northwestern’s residential colleges since the 1970s. Even the two residential colleges not named for specific themes are labeled as “multi-thematic” as opposed to “non-thematic.” The Committee generally agreed that themes etched in stone were a limiting factor when it comes to student and faculty interest. Though the 1968 Community of Scholars (commonly referred to as the Hagstrum Report) recommended establishment of thematic residential colleges, it warned that “a theme might become exclusive, narrow, faddish, pretentious, snobbish.”

The Committee therefore discussed the introduction of informal “interest groups” within each House. These interest groups would enable House residents to connect around shared interests from cinema to social justice without defining their entire House experience by a single theme. Additionally, interest groups would not neces-
sarily be permanent fixtures of a House. Every year, House Heads and student leaders would decide on interest groups for the year ahead and develop plans to bring these groups to life. If a particular interest group continues to generate enthusiasm in the House it could be reaffirmed in perpetuity, while those that no longer command attention and participation can be replaced.

Faculty or staff members who share a passion that aligns with an interest group could be recruited by House Heads or students, similarly to fellows in the residential colleges. Such an affiliation would provide common ground between students and affiliates to offer a basic framework for some of their interactions. Faculty and staff involvement with these casual interest groups would also ensure the spirit of the current system of residential college fellows can be carried into the single residential model. Each House, then, would still develop traditions that transcend the topics of interest groups; these are hallmarks even in today’s themed residen-

Are interest groups like student organizations?

*Interest groups within Houses will provide relaxed opportunities for students to engage more deeply with current passions or dabble in new areas solely for the sake of enrichment, not as a resume builder. Within interest groups, students, faculty, and staff can come together over common topics in a low-pressure environment that does not contribute to student stress and busyness. While certain students may take on informal roles as organizers and facilitators, interest groups will not have—or need—officers like student organizations do. Decisions will be made collectively by participants, affiliates, and (when appropriate) the House Head. Interest groups also will not have competitive admissions processes as some student organizations do. Rather, every resident of a House will be welcome to participate in interest group events at their leisure, though priority for events with limited space (including ticketed events) would likely go to students who are part of an interest group.*
tial colleges, such as Thirst-Tea Thursday at Humanities Residential College. The Committee sees value in encouraging interest groups provided they are flexible, inclusive, and reaffirmed regularly.

While it will be important to encourage affiliates of any House to participate actively and regularly, these faculty and staff should not be required to take on responsibilities for facilitation of an interest group. Many residential colleges have benefitted greatly from the involvement of fellows who contribute meaningfully to the life of the college even though their participation is episodic. Pathways for this type of entry-level affiliation should be preserved in the single residential model.
Greek Houses as Houses

The House concept developed, in part, as a way to imagine the integration of Greek houses into Neighborhoods. Greek house affairs are characterized by considerable autonomy. The foundation of equity of opportunity requires that second-year students living in Greek houses not only have access to the Neighborhood resources associated with the single residential model, but also feel that they are fully a part of it. For example, a Greek house could, like any other House, hold an event in a Neighborhood multi-functional room, or a Greek house resident, like any resident of a Residential Services building, could turn to a Neighborhood’s University Resource Adviser for assistance.

House Facilities

It is essential that Houses have their own spaces in order to be fully formed entities. The Committee believes that electronic access and security protocols like those already in place will engender a distinction between how House spaces are thought of and how more widely accessible Neighborhood spaces are used. Beyond access, Houses and their spaces should be defined by markers like flags, logos, or insignia to create a sense of identity.
Smaller Residential Services buildings and Greek houses that lack sufficient space for Neighborhood-wide facilities would be free-standing Houses. The Committee recommends that access be restricted to building residents, who would be members of that building’s House. All of the common spaces in these buildings will be private to residents of the House; Neighborhood residents who live in other buildings will not have access. In smaller Residential Services buildings, the first floors are being redesigned with open pantries, lounges, recreational spaces, as well as closed off rooms for seminars, meetings, or quiet study. This renovation strategy will ensure that Houses in these buildings can flourish in their own spaces.

In larger Residential Services buildings, Houses could be defined as encompassing the entire building, or a single building could be divided into multiple Houses to stay within the recommended range of 75-150 students. In the latter scenario, floor lounges would serve as House spaces. The renovation strategy of the Housing Master Plan lends itself to either approach. In larger buildings, each floor will have its own lounge or lounges (with one furnished for work and one set up as a recreational lounge with a television) as well as a laundry room.
Continuity of Traditions

Over the past four decades, many of Northwestern’s residential colleges have developed traditions that continue to be a source of pride and enjoyment for students and affiliated faculty and staff. Many of these traditions contribute significantly towards the development and reinforcement of students’ sense of identity with their campus residence. The Committee appreciates the value of these traditions and recommends making provisions to ensure that they are able to transition seamlessly into the single residential model. The proposed organization of Houses allows for different traditions of the residential colleges to persist even as names change and formal themes are retired. While many traditions are completely disconnected from these themes, those that are can live on in the informal interest groups that will exist within Houses.
The Committee also discussed the importance of creating conditions conducive to the organic emergence of new traditions, especially in newly-established Houses. While pre-existing traditions should be supported in Houses that carry over into the new residential experience, fledgling Houses must likewise be supported so that they will not be at a disadvantage as they create new identities through traditions. All residential students on campus should have exposure to customs, rituals, and events that help establish and define their sense of identity within the new residential experience.
Neighborhood Residency

With the introduction of the single residential model, the Committee recommends that students be expected to stay in the same Neighborhood for their first and second years as they fulfill the residency requirement. There should be a committee that considers exceptions to this general expectation, including changing Neighborhoods to move into a Greek house. In anticipation of the two-year residency requirement’s fall 2017 launch for the Class of 2021, Residential Services has assembled a committee with representation from key university offices to handle exceptions and accommodations for various circumstances such as medical need. Its portfolio could also include inter-Neighborhood moves.

By living in the same Neighborhood for two years, students will experience continuity of resources (especially among the Neighborhood leadership team and liaisons) and traditions (such as an enduring relationship with an Evanston or Chicago organization). Students should also have the option of continuity within their House. As discussed above, distinct first- and second-year experiences in different areas would not engender a sense of settling into Northwestern and growing more familiar with the spaces and people in the Neighborhood, which can buffer students from having to seek all resources at the campus level.

Housing Assignments

Students’ housing preferences could be accounted for through a housing assignment algorithm that accounts for a variety of preferences in more sophisticated ways than today. (See Appendix F for details of this proposed algorithm.) Such an algorithm could distinguish between essential priorities and general preferences. Roommate matching preferences could also be built into this process to facilitate pairing students with similar schedules and habits. Properly designed and deployed, an algorithmic housing assignment process could be the most equitable means of accounting for the greatest possible range of students’ preferences. Moreover, the algorithm could be adjusted to reflect new priorities and institutional circumstances without requiring a complete overhaul of the housing assignments process. As noted above, while the University has increased the diversity of the student...
body, the findings of the 2016 Black Student Experience Task Force suggest a broader need for more progress. Rather than have a Neighborhood with a representative microcosm of the student population replicating some students’ feelings of isolation, the goal of demographic proportionality across all Neighborhoods may need to wait for further advancements in student diversity.

The Committee agreed that opportunities for students to learn across difference are invaluable, which is a leading reason to populate the Neighborhoods to maximize students’ exposure to peers from different backgrounds and with different interests. At the same time, the Committee also focused on ensuring no student feels alone or isolated in their home. Several proposals were discussed for housing assignment processes that could meet both of these imperatives. Further work with more stakeholders is necessary to generate the optimal solution. One possibility entails establishing Neighborhoods as representative microcosms of the larger student population, but not buildings. Within Neighborhoods, students could then have the option to indicate preferences for assignments to buildings and/or Houses that contain particular facilities or a critical mass of students to build affinity groups and informal support networks.

Aside from creating conditions for advancing the goal of learning across difference as articulated in the Committee’s charge, the proportional distribution of students will also populate each Neighborhood with a critical mass of individuals from different domains, thus rationalizing and optimizing the staffing and delivery of support programs in each Neighborhood. For example, tutoring for large gateway courses should have roughly consistent demand across Neighborhoods instead of having high demand in one Neighborhood and low demand in another due to demographics.
Integration of Greek Houses into Neighborhoods

A uniquely Northwestern feature of Neighborhoods will be the full inclusion of Greek-house residents, which is in line with Northwestern’s history of having Greek houses located in its core residential areas. In its research, the Committee found no other school that integrated Greek houses as units within a single residential model as robust as the one put forth here. The Committee recommends Greek-house residents have the same access to Neighborhood facilities, resources, and programs as residents in Residential Services buildings. With Greek houses conceived of as a particular kind of House within a Neighborhood, students fulfilling the second year of the residency requirement as Greek-house residents will, for example, receive the same notifications about Neighborhood programs as residents in Residential Services buildings. In this respect, students fulfilling the second year of the residency requirement in a Greek house will have access to essential elements of the two-year residential experience. This ensures all students will have continuity at the Neighborhood level over their two years of living on campus even if their House experience is quite distinct. Moreover, this approach may bridge the perceived divide between students who choose to affiliate with Greek organizations and those who choose otherwise. Yet, the Committee appreciates there are norms shaping the current relationship between the entities that oversee the Greek houses and the University. The formation and oversight of community within Greek houses and how they relate to Neighborhood structures will require more extensive dialogue.

Housing During Breaks

Residential Services has recently expanded housing and dining options during breaks between quarters to accommodate an increasing population of international and low-income students for whom travel may be impractical. With the introduction of the two-year residency requirement, the Committee recommends systematizing these offerings as policy and publicizing them to reflect the University’s commitment to provide housing during those two years.
The Committee also considered the related topic of supporting student efforts to arrange local housing during the summer between the first and second year, the midpoint of the residency requirement. While there is value in offering year-round accommodations to students who face barriers to returning home in the summer, there is also merit in encouraging students to utilize summer breaks as short-term opportunities to experiment with independent living, as many students will not have done so prior to college. Guidance with respect to summer housing could be added to the portfolio of Off-Campus Life; this would have the collateral benefit of introducing students to this office’s resources before they live off campus in the junior and senior years. Beyond the complexities in negotiating summer housing and dining for a larger number of students, there is the associated obligation of providing continuous support for students’ well-being. Since a resolution would require coordination by multiple units, the Committee believes the University will be in a better position to address this issue as the two-year residency requirement is implemented.
Funding for the Residential Experience

Dues

With the establishment of the two-year residency requirement, the University must work toward greater consistency of cost across students’ housing options so that these options are equally open to all. In line with the principle of equity of opportunity, the Committee recommends that students should no longer vote on social dues that affect their fellow students’ cost of living within the context of the new residential experience.

Fees

In addition, the Committee recommends student participation in the residential experience not require payment on a per activity basis, as is often the case today. To meet these goals, a residential student activity fee will be necessary. This fee will not be a new cost; rather, it will consolidate the wide range of existing charges, which vary within and across current housing models, to make the cost both transparent and eligible for coverage by financial aid as part of the cost of attendance. As a first step, the Committee recommends an inventory of existing dues and fees be created collaboratively by the appropriate university offices. In addition, this inventory should include what programs and resources are currently provided via these charges. There is currently significant variation within and across housing models. For example, residents of residential colleges and residential communities pay a $30 quarterly fee charged by the University. These fees are separate from social dues set by student leaders of each building, which vary widely. Residents of Greek houses pay various fees (such as maintenance), some of which are set by Greek organizations’ national headquarters while others are set by house corporations. It is essential to emphasize that the Committee does not want to see less money supporting students’ residential experience; the priority is to calculate a fee (with input from Undergraduate Financial Aid) that could be covered as part of the cost of attendance since current dues and fees are not equally covered across models.
Another significant change would be for Residential Services to manage a centralized maintenance and capital expense fund for repairs and facilities enhancements. Instead of the faculty, staff, and student leaders of Neighborhoods or Houses trying to budget locally and plan for projects, they would be able to follow a standard process for requests, which would allow them to focus their attention on programming and community-building. The recent retirement of maintenance accounts in Residential Services buildings has been a positive step in this direction. The integration of Greek houses into the single residential model poses more complex challenges in this area. The Committee recognizes this topic will require further exploration in the context of the Greek houses, which have traditionally been managed differently with respect to dues and fees.

There is much more discussion required to move toward implementation of the new residential experience, which will require new partnerships, new roles, and new processes touching units within the Division of Student Affairs and under the Office of the Provost. The following list is not exhaustive, but it does highlight some areas for further dialogue and planning.
Terminology

To avoid biasing its conversations or limiting the range of imagination, the Committee used terminology free of association with current housing models at Northwestern. Terms like “Neighborhood” and “House” appearing throughout this report are mere placeholders. These labels are not recommendations. Those who carry on the Committee’s work will need to develop the actual labels for the units, spaces, and roles in the new residential experience. This is not a small matter because names must be clear without sounding too administrative. Elements of the residential experience should convey a sense of where one lives more than it communicates a feeling of school or administration.

Faculty Roles in the New Residential Experience

For nearly half a century, faculty members have contributed to the residential experience through Northwestern’s eleven residential colleges. Many have served in the leadership roles of Faculty Chair (formerly Faculty Master) and Associate Chair (formerly Associate Master) while many more have engaged with students and each other as fellows (formerly Faculty Associates). For the past seven years, the University has experimented with a Faculty-in-Residence position. Currently, four Faculty-in-Residence preside over the four residential communities. The Committee strongly believes in the importance of student-faculty interaction in the context of the residential experience, but the existing roles need to be reconceptualized for faculty and student culture alike. The current Faculty Chairs, Associate Chairs, and Faculty-in-Residence have received briefing about the Committee’s work. Some were included in subcommittee processes and a few served on the Committee. The Office of Residential Academic Initiatives should organize forums with these leaders to solicit input about refining faculty roles for the Neighborhoods and Houses.

The Office of the Provost and Deans of the undergraduate schools must offer substantial incentives such as support and relief for faculty engaged in the new residential experience. Consideration for tenure and promotion, service release,
and more should be part of a comprehensive discussion about how the University tangibly recognizes faculty contributions to undergraduate life within the residential experience and in other contexts (e.g., mentoring undergraduate research). Acknowledging that research and publishing are a high priority for tenure-line faculty at an institution like Northwestern, the most meaningful incentives may be those that allow faculty to be engaged in the residential experience without interfering with their research. New incentives should also be considered to promote engagement by teaching-track faculty as well as staff. Furthermore, the Faculty Senate should have representation from faculty with leadership roles in the residential experience. The benefits to both students and faculty are considerable and the University needs to demonstrate how much it values them.

**Linkage of Peer Advising Groups into Neighborhoods**

In recent years, the Peer Advisers (PAs) selected and trained by New Student & Family Programs control much of incoming students’ orientation to Northwestern. To date, the week of Wildcat Welcome has been the only common undergraduate experience. With the two-year residency requirement, the new residential experience will become the signature universal undergraduate experience. While meaningful, PA mentorship has been delivered without reference to the residential context. Indeed, the 2015 New Student Survey suggested linking PA groups to campus residences. The Committee sees no reason why the vitality of PA groups cannot be channeled into the residential experience. To achieve this goal, Residential Services is prepared to adjust the housing assignments process to allow for PA groups to become the building blocks of Neighborhoods. To ensure that the undergraduate schools’ advising goals are not affected, housing assignments would be made subsequent to the formation of PA groups. By connecting PA groups to Neighborhoods, PAs and PA groups will be able to continue their relationships more easily due to group members’ colocation. When feasible, PAs should live in or have previously lived in the Neighborhood of PA group members; this arrangement would foster a holistic approach to new students’ school-based orientation, college transition, and residential integration. In addition, there will be opportunities to consider how the PA and Resident Assistant roles could relate to each other to maximize support for incoming students.
The Committee supports the University’s commitment to ongoing institutional self-assessment both to increase its ability to identify students’ needs, and to meet those needs. Continued assessment of the residential experience is imperative. Since the final stages of the Committee’s work coincided with the retirement of the Director of Student Affairs Assessment, the Committee lacked critical guidance on this subject. An appropriate plan for the assessment of the new residential experience will need to be developed under the leadership of the new Executive Director of Student Affairs Assessment and Planning. Fortunately, two members of the Committee also serve on the Student Engagement Integrated Model Steering Committee and were able to make preliminary connections between the work of both committees as they developed their approaches.

### Neighborhood Experiences

#### Neighborhood Ties After the Second Year

The new residential experience should be compelling and valuable enough that students will desire continued engagement even as they move off campus for their junior and senior years. A persistent four-year Neighborhood affiliation could enable juniors and seniors living off campus to have continued access to their Neighborhood’s facilities, programs, and/or resources. New mentorship and leadership roles for juniors and seniors could further enrich the Neighborhoods and incentivize off-campus students to remain engaged in vibrant on-campus communities and keep traditions alive. Keeping juniors and seniors connected to their Neighborhoods will anchor their overall Northwestern experience in the new residential experience.

#### Dining for Greek House Residents

The Committee discussed, but did not reach consensus regarding, a proposal for a partial meal plan for residents of Greek houses, which will build community among their residents and those in Residential Services buildings. For Greek-house residents to participate fully in the life of the Neighborhood, they must be able to enter
dining halls on occasion without concern about paying out of pocket for a meal. Any such meals plan should be developed through ongoing cooperation between house corporations and Northwestern Dining to account for Greek-house culture and to ensure that such a meal plan would complement rather than compete with existing dining service in Greek houses.

**Topics for Further Consideration:**

**Neighborhood Leadership**

**Residential Life Staffing**

The Committee refrained from recommending updates to Residential Life staffing (both student and professional staff) because the early stages of its work overlapped with a search for a new Executive Director of Residential Services and the late stages coincided with a search for a new Director of Residential Life. Having reviewed staffing models in similar offices from peer institutions, the Committee recommends that the new Executive Director of Residential Services and Director of Residential Life not be constrained by past institutional practice. Many different systems for providing peer and staff support through offices with oversight of residential life have been implemented with success. While the current staffing structure or a similar one may ultimately prove to be the most appropriate, this must not be a predetermined conclusion.

**The Role of University Resource Adviser**

Throughout the Committee process, the term “advising” was explored for its divergent meanings in the distinct contexts of the undergraduate schools and the Division of Student Affairs. Residential advising roles are filled in a myriad of ways at other institutions with different organizational structures; there is no obvious prevailing model. Whether the role of University Resources Adviser results in a new full-time staff position, an expansion of scope to an existing position (such as Residence Director), or distributed responsibility across graduate students, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Vice President for Student Affairs should assemble a working group with representation from the Undergraduate Council to explore options that would integrate well with and enhance existing approaches.
Neighborhood Liaisons

While the initial constellation of liaisons will require further exploration, the Committee encourages all units to consider ways in which they can advance their mission through the residential experience. Each unit (or combination of units) will need to consider the implications for staffing, workflow, and campus-wide efforts. While there must be consistency across Neighborhoods to ensure equity of opportunity for students, year-long pilots in a single Neighborhood may be appropriate. In establishing a process for liaison relationships, there should be an emphasis on offerings most relevant to students in the first two years; this will help maintain coherence and likely lead to more productive ties. The Committee recommends a working group be formed to consider how to set up guidelines for and recruit prospective liaisons. For long-term management of this feature, a staff member in Residential Services should be designated as the point person for liaison relationships.

Topics for Further Consideration: Houses within Neighborhoods

House Size in Residential Services Buildings

There was no consensus on the best size of Houses in Residential Services buildings. (The Committee took as a given that Greek houses would constitute their own Houses.) Subcommittee work led to a recommendation of Houses of not more than 100 residents; this would require subdividing larger Residential Services buildings. Another suggested approach would be to treat each building regardless of size as a House. There was discussion about how either of these options would affect current communities. There are residential units of approximately 150 students that function well and there is no apparent need to split them in half. Indeed, it is unclear whether subdividing mid-sized buildings would be counterproductive and lead to issues about equity of facilities and common spaces. Equating Houses and Residential Services buildings would reduce the total number by establishing multiple Houses of more than 100 students, and would yield 25-30 Houses of varying sizes (ranging from 23 - 422 students). Houses of under 100 would require a deeper bench of faculty and staff to guide them programmatically, and would require the creation of upwards of 50 Houses. With fewer differences in size, vari-
ations would depend on how larger buildings are split, and whether or not small buildings would be combined. Further work will be necessary to determine the best means of accommodating logistical and facility requirements for Houses while ensuring that students have comfortable and intimate communities.

**House Leadership**

Regardless of House size, defining leadership roles will require substantial further discussion. The Council of Chairs for the residential colleges and the Faculty-in-Residence for the residential communities should be invited to participate in open forums about the positions they currently hold and how they might be adapted to and improved within the single residential model. The Committee recommends forming a working group of volunteers from this larger group to refine ideas and suggestions for House leadership positions for faculty, staff, and graduate students. That working group should include representatives from the Office of the Provost, undergraduate schools, and The Graduate School since proposals for acknowledgment and compensation will need to be developed. In addition, there may be special opportunities for consideration, such as robust roles for emeriti faculty who bring a wealth of institutional and personal perspective to mentoring and general engagement with students.

**Greek houses and Organizations as Houses**

Over many years, Northwestern’s Greek houses have developed various ways of largely managing their own affairs in accordance with the standards of their national organizations. Currently, Greek houses have live-in House Directors who fall within the parameters of the contractual relationship between Greek organizations and the University but are not part of the Residential Services organizational chart or Student Affairs staff culture. The Committee recognizes that integration of Greek houses into the single residential model will require intentional effort and coordination. With the second year of the two-year residency requirement fulfilled by living in a Greek house, a working group of representatives from Residential Services, Fraternity & Sorority Life, and Greek organizations should begin meeting to examine more closely the relationship between these stakeholders.
Additionally, new avenues should be sought for integrating Greek organizations without on-campus houses into the new residential experience. If on-campus Greek-house residency fulfills the two-year residency requirement, Greek organizations without on-campus housing are placed at a disadvantage. Possibilities should therefore be investigated for reserving floors in residential buildings for members of these organizations. These housing blocks would function similarly to other Houses in the Neighborhoods. In addition to resolving inequity among Greek organizations, such an arrangement could help draw students in these organizations closer into on-campus Neighborhood communities. As Greek houses and organizations are integrated into the single residential model, productive relationships between the University and these organizations must be preserved. An ongoing dialogue will therefore be necessary throughout this process.

**Topics for Further Consideration:**

**Residency**

**Incoming Student Housing**

With the two-year residency requirement accompanied by an intentional two-year residential experience, the process by which incoming students are housed will be more important than ever. Many of the Committee’s recommendations depend on various forms of diversity within Neighborhoods, but achieving that macro-level goal must account for the experiences of sub-populations on campus. At a minimum, the Vice President for Student Affairs should request that some members of the Undergraduate Residential Experience Committee, Campus Inclusion & Community, and the Black Student Experience Task Force form a working group to explore how best to populate Neighborhoods and/or structure Houses to address the findings of and advance the respective goals of each entity. This group should consider current demographics, plans for assessment of underrepresented minority students in the new residential experience, and milestones for reconvening (e.g., after Undergraduate Admissions meets President Schapiro’s call for 20% Pell-eligible students by 2020) to reconsider the existing housing assignments process.
Calculation of Residential Student Activity Fee

Deliberation will be required on details of an activity fee that can only be addressed after the structural and programmatic features of the residential experience are further developed. In particular, the Committee flags for future discussion the question of how this fee will be applied to students in Residential Services buildings and Greek houses. If Greek house residents will have the same access to Neighborhood facilities and programs as other Neighborhood residents in Residential Services buildings, it will need to be determined how this fee will apply to them. Similarly, if persistent four-year Neighborhood identities are established to provide juniors and seniors living off campus with continued access to Neighborhood facilities and programs, it will also need to be determined what proportion of this fee should apply to them.
Creating a Universal Residential Experience
INDEX OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
COMMITTEE CHARGE__________________________ 77

APPENDIX B:
COMMITTEE PROCESS___________________________ 78
• COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP______________ 78
• MEETING SCHEDULE______________________ 79
• SUBCOMMITTEE INFORMATION___________ 79
• LIST OF NORTHWESTERN OFFICES
  AND ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED____ 85
• LIST OF PEER INSTITUTIONS CONSULTED 86

APPENDIX C:
SAMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD MAPS___________________ 87

APPENDIX D:
UREC PUBLICITY_____________________________ 92

APPENDIX E:
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT______________________ 93

APPENDIX F:
HOUSING ASSIGNMENT ALGORITHM CONCEPT_ 95

APPENDIX G:
COMMITTEE RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY_______ 96
Appendix A: Committee Charge from the Vice President of Student Affairs

As you may know, the university is committed to enhancing the sense of community, engagement, and inclusion among our undergraduate students on our campus. To that end, there are several strategies underway in Residential Services that aim to address these principles. One of the major strategies is to focus on the role residence life and how our living environments contribute to these principles. More specifically, we have developed a ten-year master plan to address the quality and conditions of our residential facilities to ensure they are safe, healthy, and conducive to learning and social interaction. Several new residential facilities will be built while the others will be renovated. Another strategy is to implement a two-year residency requirement of our first and second year students starting in the Fall 2017. We are in the planning phase for this major initiative.

A third strategy is to develop a consistent and integrated programmatic model through residence life and academic initiatives that is aligned with these principles. This effort will require us to reflect on the current structures and features of the existing programmatic models, including our residence halls, residential colleges, and residential communities. To advance this vital component of strategic planning, I am forming the Undergraduate Residential Experience Committee of vested members of the university community to assist in creating a vibrant living and learning model.

With your background and experience, I believe you can provide essential guidance, input, and expertise to make this initiative successful. The committee’s composition is intentionally broad and includes faculty, staff, students, and administrators. I am pleased to share that both Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education Ron Braeutigam and Executive Director of Residential Services Paul Riel have agreed to co-chair the committee. They will convene the meetings. The expectation is that the committee will provide Provost Dan Linzer and me with frequent updates on your progress and a final report with recommendations of an integrated model.

I anticipate the committee work starting in earnest during Winter Quarter with the expectation that recommendations be presented to me and the Provost early Summer 2016.

Note: The completion date for the recommendations was extended to accommodate the broadening scope of the Committee’s investigation.
Appendix B: Committee Process

Committee Membership

Committee Co-Chairs

- **Ron Braeutigam:** Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education; Professor of Economics
- **Paul Riel:** Assistant Vice President for Residential and Dining Services

Committee Membership

- **Tenisia Adams:** Residence Director, Residential Life (Fall 2016-Winter 2017)
- **Mary Desler:** Director, Student Affairs Assessment (Winter-Summer 2016)
- **Mona Dugo:** Senior Associate Dean of Students
- **Renee Engel:** Professor of Instruction of Psychology; Faculty-in-Residence, Allison Residential Community (Winter-Spring 2016)
- **Mary Finn:** Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences
- **Richard Freeman:** Clinical Assistant Professor of Engineering; Undergraduate Adviser
- **Jack Heider:** McCormick College of Engineering and Applied Science Class of 2017; President, Residence Hall Association (Winter-Spring 2016)
- **Joe Holtgreive:** Assistant Dean of Student Career Development, McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science
- **Paul Hubinsky:** Associate Director, Residential Life
- **Ross Krasner:** Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications Class of 2018; Senator, Associated Student Government (Winter-Spring 2016)
- **Susan Lee:** Professor of Dance; Faculty Chair, Humanities Residential College
- **Dominique Mejia:** Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences Class of 2017; President, Residential College Board (Fall 2016-Winter 2017)
- **Saul Morson:** Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures; Faculty Chair, Willard Residential College
- **Joe O’Geen:** Residence Director, Residential Life (Winter-Spring 2016)
- **Julie Payne-Kirchmeier:** Associate Vice President and Chief of Staff, Division of Student Affairs
- **Justin Shannin:** School of Communication Class of 2016; Resident Assistant, Residential Life (Winter-Spring 2016)
- **David Shor:** Director of Clinical Services, Counseling and Psychological Services
- **Garrett Taliaferro:** House Corporation Officer, Phi Delta Theta
- **Aric Waldman:** Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences Class of 2018
- **Julie Windsor Mitchell:** Campus Minister, University Christian Ministry
- **Brad Zakarin:** Director, Office of Residential Academic Initiatives
Ex Officio Membership (Committee Staff)

• Tim DeBold: Assistant Director, Office of Residential Academic Initiatives

Meeting Schedule

The full Committee met on January 28, February 8, March 7, March 31, April 22, May 13, May 20, July 17, November 4, November 17, December 2, March 15, and April 5.

Subcommittee Information

Four subcommittees were formed to enable greater focus on key issues: Community, Affinity, and Identity; Equity of Experience; Student-Faculty Interaction and Instruction; and Wellness, Support, and Thriving. Below are synopses of their final reports to the full Committee.

Community, Affinity, and Identity Subcommittee

Membership:

• Adams
• Desler (chair)
• Dugo
• Heider
• Payne-Kirchmeier
• Taliaferro

The Community, Affinity, and Identity subcommittee was tasked with examining how to create strong and supportive communities for students. This topic included investigating the ideal size for a community that balances students’ need for an intimate and tightly-knit group with opportunities to meet new people. This subcommittee also discussed roles for student governance. Building institutional affinity through the residential experience was incorporated into this subcommittee’s work on the premise that affinity is rooted in students’ sense of community on campus.

The subcommittee affirmed the centrality of the two-year residential experience for building and sustaining community at Northwestern, while acknowledging that it will not (and should not) be the only site for student communities. As members of different communities around campus, students value this diversity of connections as a feature of campus culture. Moreover, the subcommittee acknowledged that community cannot be mandated or engineered in a “top-down” approach; rather, it must arise organically from students. The University, therefore, must provide the resources and conditions for community to form, and to ensure that students have the agency to form their own communities. Students must have a sense of ownership over
their living environments if communities are to thrive in residential spaces. Importantly, this will require ensuring that all students have the same opportunities to participate fully in the residential experience, including equal access to high-quality facilities, services, and support, no matter where they live on campus.

Based on meetings with fourteen different student groups and stakeholders across campus, the subcommittee developed a series of recommendations. The first was the implementation of smaller “sub-communities” within Neighborhoods because Neighborhoods will be too large to be students’ main communities. (Note: the Committee later decided to call these simply “Houses.”) These Houses should ideally be no larger than 100 students. Greek houses will stand as independent Houses within Neighborhoods. Ultimately, the subcommittee came to view a basic distinction between Neighborhoods and Houses: Neighborhoods will function primarily as administrative units that provide facilities and deliver services to students, while Houses will be where students have the freedom and agency to build community for themselves.

The subcommittee further suggested that House populations should be as diverse and inclusive as possible to create conditions for learning across difference. This can be accomplished by randomly assigning incoming students to Houses (with the exception of Greek houses). While flexibility to move between Houses each year was discussed, the subcommittee recommended provisions to ensure that free movement does not lead to homogenization of House populations. Additionally, students’ living costs must be standardized and covered by financial aid so all can participate fully.

With respect to governance, the subcommittee also recommended that every House have a student board charged with planning and implementing community-building activities, mentoring programs, community service projects, and social events. The subcommittee acknowledged that more professional staff will be necessary to advise such boards properly. House representatives might also serve on a larger Neighborhood council. A third layer of umbrella governance could conceivably be created with representatives from each Neighborhood. Ultimately, however, the subcommittee concludes that community-building activities will be most effective on a smaller scale, which means concentrating such efforts at the House level.

**Equity of Experience Subcommittee**

- **Membership:**
  - Freeman (chair)
  - O'Geen
  - Riel
  - Waldman
  - Zakarin

The Equity of Experience subcommittee was charged with exploring equity in the residential experience. The notion of equity was conceived broadly to include everything from financial accessibility and physical access
to programmatic elements that could advance student learning about diversity and inclusion. The subcommittee affirmed that incorporating equity into planning and implementing the residential experience is essential as the University’s undergraduate population becomes more diverse, especially along socioeconomic lines. The single residential model must do more than minimize and mitigate inequities, it should actively promote students’ sense of belonging and learning across differences, especially during the transition to college.

Throughout the Committee’s interviews and discussions, support was expressed for a housing assignment process that would maximize diversity across as many domains as possible (major, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability) to promote learning across difference. At the same time, the subcommittee acknowledged the Black Student Experience Task Force’s final report, which highlighted students’ sense of “being the only one” and their desire for comfortable spaces in which to socialize and simply relax. As a possible solution, affinity-based housing or neighborhood interest groups could supplement Neighborhood and House structures.

Another focus was ensuring that the full residential experience be financially accessible to all students. The current system of social dues and university fees is a source of inequity for students because rates vary by building and residential model. The subcommittee recommended a single, universal residential student activity fee that can be incorporated into the overall cost of attendance and covered by financial aid. Moreover, the subcommittee suggested a centralized box office to manage ticketing for residential events (including everything from formals to theater outings) in order to facilitate low-income students’ access to discounted or free tickets. Financial accessibility may also require the creation of a mechanism for students to appeal for accommodations within the two-year residency requirement. For example, a student whose wellness depends in part on having a single room should not have to choose between wellness and cost.

The subcommittee also noted that accessible housing must exist across campus for the Neighborhood model to work. Students living in an accessible suite should have the ability to live with a roommate if they choose, and must be able to access their friends’ rooms regardless of location. This will not only require accessible design throughout each building, but also improved curb-to-curb transportation between Neighborhoods. An intra-campus shuttle could increase all students’ movement between Neighborhoods and other campus locations, enhancing accessibility campus-wide.
Creating a Universal Residential Experience

**Student Faculty Interaction and Instruction Subcommittee**

**Membership:**
- Braeutigam
- Krasner
- Lee (chair)
- Mejia
- Morson
- Shannin

The Student-Faculty Interaction and Instruction subcommittee was convened to examine new ways to build on existing residence-based teaching opportunities and academic initiatives, and to expand forums for student-faculty contact in non-evaluative settings. This entailed examining the role of shared intellectual interests both in mediating faculty-student interactions, and in fostering student communities. This subcommittee also explored avenues for integrating faculty deeply into the fabric of the residential experience to encourage development of meaningful interpersonal and mentoring relationships among faculty and students that yield benefits for both.

Based on several dozen surveys, interviews, and informal conversations with students and residential college staff, the subcommittee issued a series of recommendations. First and foremost, the subcommittee urged the University to recognize the contributions of faculty and staff who participate in the residential experience, and to develop meaningful and compelling incentives (including in the area of tenure and promotion) that enable faculty to devote more time to engaging with students outside the classroom. These incentives must be developed centrally (i.e., with the Office of the Provost coordinating amongst school deans) so that they will apply as consistently as possible to faculty across departments and schools. An institutional culture of interacting with students via the new residential experience cannot take root without appropriate recognition of faculty time and effort in this sphere of undergraduate life.

The subcommittee highlighted that existing residential college and residential community seminars (credit-bearing courses taught by affiliated faculty in the building) provide valuable opportunities for students to form deeper connections with both affiliated faculty, and neighbors. Beyond continuing this tradition of residence-based instruction in the new residential model, the subcommittee explored how new possibilities for integrating co-curricular elements could tie residence-based instruction to the residential experience in a stronger way. Faculty reported wanting to choose between counting such teaching towards their overall course load or receiving compensation for a teaching overload (whether as a stipend or contribution to their research account); greater flexibility in compensation options should be explored to promote faculty participation.

Additionally, the subcommittee recommended that faculty be involved in the new residential experience outside the framework of a course syllabus. There should be cohorts of faculty and staff who are consistently available to engage with students in a variety of capacities.

Appendix B: Committee Process
engaged with the same community of students, which will allow for emergence of more meaningful interpersonal connections and mentoring relationships. Care should be taken, however, to limit the size of the communities with which faculty and staff members are affiliated: the subcommittee notes that even 150 students would be a large number for a faculty or staff member to get to know over the two-year residential experience. Every building should have affiliated faculty leadership with a mandate, in part, to draw in other faculty and support their engagement with students. As student organizations are integrated into the Neighborhoods, faculty advisers must be included. Faculty and graduate students should also have advising roles with student governance, and further plans must be developed for greater involvement from non-tenure-track faculty, as well as graduate students.

Finally, the subcommittee identified the value of shared interests for organizing residential activities that involve faculty, especially at the smaller House level. While common interests can facilitate the development of close communities, flexibility and adaptability are essential. Any themes incorporated into the residential experience should therefore not be permanent in order to accommodate student-driven changes and to provide unaffiliated faculty and staff points of entry. It is also important to ensure the representation of a broad range of themes so that students’ residential experiences do not simply replicate their academic programs.

Wellness, Support, and Thriving Subcommittee

Membership:
- Finn
- Holtgreive (chair)
- Hubinsky
- Shor
- Windsor Mitchell

The Wellness, Support, and Thriving subcommittee was tasked with considering ways to foster student wellness in the single residential model. The subcommittee’s premise was that feeling isolated is among the primary detractors to student wellness, and that feeling accepted and understood is integral to combating isolation. The subcommittee therefore recommended that the new residential experience focus on connecting students via shared experiences in small groups. Some students who were interviewed noted that they value autonomy, but they also appreciate feeling compelled to participate in occasional small-group programming that generates new social connections. The subcommittee concluded that a sense of residential connection and identity will encourage students to remain engaged beyond the two-year residency requirement, ensuring that juniors and seniors continue to feel a part of their Neighborhood and access its offerings. At a time when students are more immersed in their undergraduate schools, Neighborhood connections will keep the University as a whole (including its abundant support resources) front and center.
The subcommittee also affirmed the centrality of diversity and inclusivity in student communities to combat feelings of isolation. Students of all identities and backgrounds must feel safe and welcome in their campus homes. In particular, financial barriers to full participation in the residential experience must be eliminated. Moreover, all students’ basic needs must be met, which means more than covering room and board with financial aid. For example, if a student cannot afford sufficient warm clothing for winter, they will struggle to thrive at Northwestern.

The subcommittee also stressed a need for students to connect in non-competitive settings. In interviews, students reported feeling most connected in student groups with non-competitive admissions. This culture of competition also affects students’ academic and professional lives, with many students feeling pressured to accumulate credentials at the expense of developing meaningful personal and social connections. Small communities in residential spaces can help students find a sense of belonging that will enhance both their overall wellness and Northwestern experience.

Reducing stress in students’ academic lives is also essential to student wellness. Many students interviewed by the subcommittee valued residentially-based tutoring and academic support. Such programs not only increase the visibility and accessibility of academic support, but they also reinforce Neighborhood communities that combat students’ sense of isolation. By attending academic support programs with their peers, students come to realize that they are not alone in feeling that they need help in their classes, helping to normalize a culture of coming forward for assistance.

A culture of coming forward is also vital for supporting students’ overall health. Some interviewed students expressed a reluctance to seek assistance out of a fear that sensitive personal or academic information would be shared by university offices. While the subcommittee encouraged the institution to leverage the network of advising and counseling available through academic schools, Student Assistance and Support Services (SASS), and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) to identify students in crisis, the subcommittee cautioned against measures that compromise students’ sense of confidentiality. The subcommittee further recommended that university support offices explore new ways of helping students to build resilience and to understand that they are on the front lines of support for one another.
## List of Northwestern Offices and Organizations Consulted

The Committee wanted its work to be informed by voices of students, faculty, and staff from across the University. An essential part of every subcommittee’s work, therefore, was to hold meetings and focus groups with a diverse array of individuals, offices, and organizations, to ensure that each subcommittee report (and ultimately the full Committee report) reflected input from the greater Northwestern community.

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**List of Peer Institutions Consulted**

In addition to consultations within the Northwestern community, the Committee also researched current practices at Northwestern’s peer institutions. Interviews were conducted, and position descriptions, handbooks, foundational documents, and program details from a range of other universities were examined for insights that could enhance the Committee’s deliberations and recommendations. The Committee reviewed interview notes and documents from:

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Appendix C: Sample Neighborhood Maps

The Committee considered many different layouts for distributing the campus into Neighborhoods. The following maps are the most recent iteration of these layouts, but they are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent a formal proposal for Neighborhood boundaries. Neighborhood geography will continue to be influenced by updates to the Housing Master Plan over several more years.
Creating a Universal Residential Experience

Appendix C: Sample Neighborhood Maps
Appendix C: Sample Neighborhood Maps
Appendix C: Sample Neighborhood Maps
Southeast Neighborhood

- Classroom
- Dining Venue
- Faculty in Residence
- Fitness Room
- Neighborhood Desk
- Shuttle Stop
Appendix D:
UREC Publicity

Campus Media Coverage


Other Publicity

Webpage: www.northwestern.edu/living/housing-options/undergraduate-residential-experience/index.html

Town Hall Meeting Schedule

• October 3 in Rogers House
• October 5 in the Foster-Walker Complex
• October 13 in the Shepard Hall Engagement Center
• October 18 in Ayers Hall
• October 19 in Goodrich House
• October 24 in Elder Hall
• October 25 in 1835 Hinman
Appendix E: Institutional Context

Current Residential Models

Nearly all first-year students currently choose to live on campus and approximately two-thirds opt to stay on for a second year in a Residential Services building (as distinct from a Greek house). The Committee gave close attention to the three models available to first-year students to identify what works well in each, and considered prospects for synthesis. The multiple residential models offer students different experiences: There are 11 residential colleges, ranging from 40 to nearly 250 residents each, with approximately 1,200 students in total. With the first established in the 1970s, some residential colleges have a unifying theme while others are multi-thematic. Each college is headed by a faculty member who advises a student executive board and recruits faculty and staff to participate as “fellows” in the life of the college through meals, informal presentations, and outings. In addition, fellows teach seminars in the colleges and mentor residents as research assistants through a specially funded program. Students can be either resident or non-resident members of a residential college.

There are now four residential communities with approximately 1,400 students in total. The first two opened in 2010 and 2011. Two more opened in September 2016 and consist of two buildings each. The distinguishing feature of this model is live-in faculty. In each residential community, a Faculty-in-Residence and Residence Director (a live-in student affairs professional) design cultural, educational, and social activities to build community and enrich students’ residential experience.

There are currently eight traditional residence halls on campus, ranging in size from 25 residents to over 500. Some are open exclusively to returning students. Each building has its own character, spirit, and unique advantages. Resident Assistants and student leaders from programming boards plan social events and educational programs to help students connect and thrive.

In recent years, the primary message to prospective students has been about choice in housing, which conveniently aligns with institutional culture and marketing about students choosing their own Northwestern direction. However, the limits of “choice” became clear during the Committee’s work. Variations in housing options can preoccupy incoming students wanting to make the “right” decision about model, location, room, and more. Additionally, without a common residential experience it is challenging to set first-year students’ expectations, which are a key predictor of behavior.
Creating a Universal Residential Experience

Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan

The Housing Master Plan, two-year residency requirement, and Committee’s charge all relate to the 2013-18 Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan. As “full partners in the student learning experience,” the Division “partners with the academic schools/colleges and other University divisions in alignment with the University’s vision and mission to advance student learning and success.” The single residential model proposed by the Committee is a manifestation of this vision statement. With the new residential experience as a framework for such robust partnerships, the Division of Student Affairs can ensure two years of sustained contact with students to support the University’s core goals.

Several of the themes associated with the strategic plan are also fundamental to the new residential experience:

- Enrich the Northwestern community
- Advance social justice
- Foster student wellness
- Further student learning

The foundations of the Committee’s recommendations as outlined above are informed by these strategic themes, which shape various aspects of the new residential experience from its inception.
Appendix F:
Housing Assignment Algorithm Concept

The report alludes to the creation of a housing assignment algorithm that would account for students’ housing needs and preferences in a way that advances the goals of the single residential model. While the details of such an algorithm were not the subject of extensive deliberation, preliminary discussions of this concept with stakeholders generated significant interest. Some of the rudiments of this concept are therefore reproduced here to encourage development of this concept.

The housing assignment process could begin by populating Neighborhoods with Peer Advising groups, a system that offers several advantages. Members of a PA group would live in close proximity, which would facilitate PA group activities during Wildcat Welcome and continued connections throughout the first year. Additionally, using PA groups as building blocks for Neighborhoods would simplify proportional distribution of students by academic interest, helping to fulfill the Committee’s goal to promote learning across difference. Moreover, it would ensure a critical mass of students from each school when coordinating academic support programs and instructional offerings.

Once students have been assigned to a Neighborhood, their assignment to a particular House would be informed by their preferences. If each House determines its interest groups for the following year before the housing assignment process, incoming students could register their preferences for different interest groups. Additionally, student preferences could be solicited for building-level features such as size and proximity to amenities. The intake of information would also include lifestyle preferences ranging from sleep hours to noise level during studying. The assignment algorithm would process all of these data to ensure that every student is matched with a room that meets as many of their preferences as possible.

In order to encourage students to reflect on their priorities, preferences could be weighted. In this possible model, a student has to allocate a limited number of “points” to features to indicate their preference for each. A student could thus express secondary and tertiary preferences while also signaling the relative weights of each. If a student’s first choice cannot be accommodated, the algorithm can then determine how to prioritize other preferences. Additionally, if available rooms do not allow one set of a student’s preferences to be accommodated (e.g., preference for proximity to an amenity), the algorithm could give that student greater priority when processing other metrics (e.g., interest group). If developed in consultation with stakeholders (including students), this system could account for a student’s multifaceted set of preferences and make a housing assignment that accommodates preferences to the fullest extent possible.
Appendix G: Committee Research Bibliography

Monographs and Collected Studies


Appendix G: Committee Research Bibliography


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Creating a Universal Residential Experience

Appendix G: Committee Research Bibliography

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- Inkelas, K. K., Szélényi, K., Soldner, M., & Brower, A. M. (2007). *National study of living-learning programs report of findings*. 