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HILO

**Executive  
Summary:  
UH Hilo  
Student  
Housing  
Needs  
Survey**

October  
**2011**

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For further information about the design or results of this survey please contact Siân Millard, Strategic Planning Coordinator at [smillard@hawaii.edu](mailto:smillard@hawaii.edu).

## Executive Summary: UH Hilo Student Housing Needs Survey, October 2011

The *purpose of the survey* was to seek student views on university housing to help inform design of new student housing planned for Kawili Street, and to help improve current housing. 872 students responded to the survey; 21% of the entire student body for fall 2011. The *male/female split* is not representative of UH Hilo's student population where females account for approximately 60% of the student body, and males approximately 40%.

The *age distribution* of respondents was as expected with the majority aged between 18 and 23, traditional ages for university students. The vast majority of respondents, 91%, were studying full-time at UH Hilo, the remainder was studying part-time.

Most respondents said they either currently lived on campus (29.2%) or rented their housing off-campus (28.4%). About one fifth of respondents lived with their family, and just under one fifth lived off-campus with family or friends (both assumed to be non-rent paying).

Lack of privacy, expense and lack cooking/dining options were the main reasons why respondents *chose not to live on campus*.

The majority of those who said they currently live on campus were aged under 22, with most aged 18-19 (traditional freshman age). No respondents aged 30 plus reported that they currently live on campus.

The top five reasons selected for *living on campus* were: to be close to classes; to be close to other educational resources; to be close to on-campus activities; convenience of having maintenance/trash etc taken care of; expectation of family/friends to live on campus. Male and female respondents differed slightly in their reasons for living on campus. Those aged 17-19 and 24-27 both reported proximity to food services as the fifth most popular reason for choosing to live on campus.

Overall, 53% of respondents were either *very satisfied or satisfied with UH Hilo's current housing*, 17.9% were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied, and 29.1% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. 70.2% of *current residents* reported being very satisfied or satisfied with UH Hilo housing, compared to 33.3% of *past residents*.

Respondents were asked what UH Hilo could do to *improve their on-campus residential experience*. Reference to the need to improve maintenance and upgrades of UH Hilo student housing was commonly cited across all respondents. There were some differences in other comments from current and previous residents. Current residents focused on the need to improve wireless connectivity and improve meal-plans/dining options, whereas previous residents highlighted the need for more policy and rule enforcement and more activities for residents.

Respondents highlighted the following top-three *shared amenities*, from a closed list, as being most important to include in the new student housing: dining facility; parking; and reception area. Other shared amenities respondents reported they would like to see (as identified from qualitative comments) were: shared kitchen facilities; shared outdoor space (e.g. BBQ area), coffee shop/mini-store or food outlet; common room (e.g. to rent out for parties, music practice, movies etc); and an on-site security office.

Respondents preferred **room layouts** in order of preference were: two small single bedroom suite; four small single bedroom suite; four-person, two-bedroom suite; and a group cooperative living arrangement. There were no differences in layout preference by gender or age.

Other main **comments respondents made on the potential layout** of the housing were: the need to balance privacy (i.e. single bedrooms) with the need to add more ‘beds’ to campus; layouts for families; and layouts for professional fraternities. Along with the layout design of the housing, respondents also proposed other design features such as a covered walkway from the new housing to the rest of the campus, soundproofing for walls to cut down on noise disturbance between bedrooms/units, fans and screen doors/windows to aid air cooling and circulation, wheelchair accessible bedrooms, and storage areas (both shared and personal).

A key aim of this survey was to gather data that would help the university to understand students’ **price sensitivity to the cost of student housing**. The Price Sensitivity Meter asks respondents four simple, standardized questions about price. Respondents answered the questions based on what they had said was their most preferred room layout (of the four noted above). The resulting analysis tells us the best price range for the product (in this case the housing layout) and the optimal price point – or the recommended price for the product. There was little difference between all four layouts. The optimal price point was around **\$450 per month**.

Respondents were asked to indicate, if they lived in the new student housing, what **meal-plan** they would prefer. The majority of respondents indicated they would prefer a points-plan or no meal-plan at all. For the minority who preferred a set number of meals, 5 or 7 meals a week were the most common selections. Respondents indicated they would be very willing or willing to walk for up to 8 minutes to access dining services, with the optimal time being less than 5 minutes.

To help further inform **dining services policy and provision** for the new student housing (and current residents), respondents were asked to write any further they had on accessing university dining services. Some of the issues referred to the accessibility of dining services in terms of dining hours and covered walkways. Other issues related to the current provision of food on campus (e.g. food variety/quality, hours, food vendors etc) and how that could be improved.

In an effort to improve the **activities offered to campus residents**, respondents were asked to rate by level of importance several different activities that could take place. Health and wellness activities, outdoor pursuits and environmental sustainability projects were the top three activities identified, with hall government and class standing clubs being seen as least important. Others identified from qualitative responses were: activities to promote community and ‘school spirit’; off-campus activities; and evening activities

As a final question, respondents were invited to write any **further comment** they may have had on the proposed new student housing, student housing at UH Hilo in general, or the survey. Comments made reflected issues such as ensuring the new housing is affordable, considering family-friendly designs, improving dining services, improving maintenance and upgrading existing housing, and ensuring housing policies are enforced.

The **outcomes from this survey** will be actively utilized by the UH Hilo senior leadership, housing office, dining services, architects for the new housing, and other interested groups to improve the residential experience for our university’s students.