

Third Consultation: Housing for Students Who Parent

For the past year Ancillary Services has been undergoing a consultation to better understand the housing needs of student who parent.

There have been two previous in-person and online opportunities to communicate and engage with Ancillary Services, if you are a student who parents, and this is the final opportunity, prior to the consultation closing.

Purpose of the Consultation:

To better understand the reality for students who parent, before making an informed decision around the future of family housing. The goal of the consultation was to allow students to express their unique challenges and expectations around housing matters, so that the University of Alberta can make a decision on future housing developments.

Primary Questions:

1. What do you feel the role of the University is in supporting your housing needs?
2. What could the University do (better) to support students who parent?
3. Is there a need for a family housing residence on campus?

What We Heard:

The primary issues brought up by students who parent had to do with child care support, or lack thereof. There were questions revolving around whether or not the institution would ever consider an on campus, drop-in childcare service in the future.

Childcare is the most prevalent and high stress issue for students who parent, with respect to getting their child into an appropriate facility, cost, and proximity to campus, work and home.

Students also discussed the need for flexibility and empathy around being a student who parents from their professors and faculty. Students who parent feel invisible on campus and that their at home demands have no room for accommodation with respect to exams, practicum placements, emergency absences or class times on campus.

Students who parent were also very happy to be asked to vocalize their needs. Though the most important needs did not relate to housing, there was an appreciation that their voice was being heard by the institution.

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What We Heard In Relation to Housing Needs:

Students discussed that they do feel that the University has a role to play in their housing needs. The University needs to provide safe, affordable housing, with a focus on better supporting students to build community.

There were many suggestions revolving around subsidized or lower income housing, but when the responsibilities of Ancillary Services were explained and what future housing could look like was discussed, students did not seem interested, primarily due to cost.

With respect to housing needs, the key areas of importance were: convenient access to reliable transit, affordability and community creation of like-minded individuals.

What We Saw:

The approximate number of students who parent on campus is 25% of the graduate population (as self-identified by graduate students), which is approximately 1869 students. We currently have no reporting mechanism as to how many undergraduate students are parents.

Though the students who did engage with the consultation were keen and informative, the total number of respondents was extremely low, in comparison to the total number of students on campus; over the first two surveys, less than one hundred students who parent participated in total (5% of the population). This data also showed that current Michener Park residents, approximately 16% of the students who parent population, did not fully engage with the consultation.

What Has the Consultation Told Us?

Students who parent would like to be better recognized on campus, but housing, specifically housing within the Residence system, is not one of the main priorities.

Students who parent have many fiscal, time and familial pressures, which they have to coordinate alongside their academic careers, but most live off campus and have no intention or want to live within the residence system at the University.

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The University needs to support students who parent more, but the supports students who parent are looking for, fall under the responsibilities or direction of the Office of the Dean of Students and not Ancillary Services.

Next Steps:

Ancillary services will be completing a report, reflecting and presenting the summaries of the three consultative processes with students to share with the Board of Governors. Within said report, a reflection of the students who parents needs will be outlined, specifically in regards to housing.

Who Will be Making the Decision?:

The decision, as to the future of family housing at the University of Alberta, will be determined by Ancillary Services. Based on need, assessment of feedback, from this consultation and building occupancy, Ancillary Services will continue to strive to provide residence to all students of the University, when requested. However, specific, purpose-built housing for families is not a primary need of students who parent and would not reflect what was heard from students via this year long consultation.

Now is your time to make your voice heard. Please feel free to submit your response, to the information provided in this [survey](#).

Thank you for your time,

Ancillary Services