Fall 2018 Pre-arrival Webinar – On Campus Housing

Shuhui Lin: Alright, so we'll go ahead and get started. Thank you for participating in our pre-arrival webinar for the topic of university housing and dining.

Shuhui Lin: For those of you who are new to the webinar series, the pre-arrival webinar is the webinar series provided to incoming international student. This will help you prepare your arrival plan for traveling and living in Iowa City, understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, and transition to student life at the University of Iowa. All the webinars will be recorded and posted on our website once we have them transcribed. So if you want to go back listen to it again, if you missed part of the webinar, you can always go back to our website to watch the recording of the webinars.

Shuhui Lin: During the webinar, if you encounter any technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat function. If you have any questions related to the day's topics please use the chat function to post your questions and we will answer those questions live at the end.

Shuhui Lin: If you have not received your I-20 or DS2019 yet, you can pay your e-Ship-Global fee in the iHawk system. Once you have paid the e-ship-global fee, we will send you documents right away.

Shuhui Lin: Some important dates. International graduate orientation is from August 7th through August 10th, and then undergraduate orientation is from August 12th to August 19th they are mandatory, so you have to arrive prior to orientation in order to attend them.

Shuhui Lin: Alright. So now I will give it to our guest today for introductions.

Virginia: Hi, Good afternoon and welcome to the University of Iowa. I'm Virginia Ibrahim-Olin, I'm one of our system directors in University housing and dining, and I work with our contracts and assignments team to help you get your room assignment in your roommate matched for your room on campus this fall.

Keniese: Hi. My name is Keniese Evans. I'm one of the assistant directors in residence education, and I do a lot of the staff within the halls in the management of the halls, so making sure that you have what you need while you’re living with us.

Virginia: So today's discussion: we are going to give you an overview of University housing and dining since we anticipate that many of you with us today have not visited campus. We will talk through the housing application and assignment timelines, we’ll discuss living and learning communities, overview roommate options, talk about meal plans, discuss the anticipated costs for a living on campus this academic year, give you the option to work for University housing and dining and then also provide you all with the answers to some of our frequently asked questions before we dive into your questions.

Virginia: So University housing and dining is a large system on campus here at the University of Iowa. Next fall, we will house 5821 students, including you. You all will be supported with 146 resident assistants. There are 18 living learning communities in our residence halls and we have 10 halls that you could live in. There are 15 retail dining locations, three marketplaces and one really delicious food truck.
**Virginia:** In order to live on campus, all students are required to submit a housing application. This slide provides you with an overview of what that timeline looked like. Our housing application opened last October and on May 1 was the deadline for roommate requests in living learning community preferences due. May 15 was our priority deadline for ADA or medical accommodations requests related to your housing assignment. May 31 is when our housing application will close online and it’s also the deadline for you to request a roommate if you are interested in new student housing. Throughout June to August is when roommate assignments and roommate information will be available to students, and then you all will move in on August 11 in preparation for your new student orientation on August 12.

**Keniese:** So we have those 18 living learning communities that Virginia mentioned; that basically that is our way of connecting what you are experiencing in the classroom to what your experience in the halls. So we’re creating a shared experience where you will get to connect with other students going through those courses and interested in that topic as well as connect you with mentors and campus resource and staff and professors. So really, it’s an opportunity to try some new things, make some new friends, and really start explore to the University of Iowa, as well as Iowa City.

**Keniese:** We do this because we know that research shows that students who experience living learning communities tend to stay in college, earn higher GPAs, and experience a greater degree of satisfaction with your overall college experience. So we’re really just trying to get you involved and get you a really great experience.

**Virginia:** In a living learning community, that is a group of students that live on a floor or a hallway together that take a course in common have activities planned for them. You can have a variety of room types within that living learning community. Some of the most common ones that we have on campus are a double room and that’s an occupancy of two students sharing a room together. They may have a community or individual bathroom down the hall. We offer a standard double, which is a smaller room, so you pay a little bit less for it. We have a double room with pod configuration and what that is that provides individual use bathrooms down the hall in our newer buildings Catlett and Peterson. We offer a suite-style housing with a shared bathroom and kitchen and that is where you and your roommate would share a kitchen and a bathroom with the room next to you, and those are located in Mayflower Hall and those students are also eligible for a Hawkeye meal plan that I’ll talk about later. And then we also offer triple rooms those have two roommates, instead of just one. It’s important for us to share that single rooms or rooms with their own private bathroom are extremely limited on campus and not options for you as a first year student. However, I want to assure you that all of our restrooms will provide you with privacy to handle your personal functions.

**Virginia:** If you are a student with a disability or a medical need for a housing accommodation, we will work one on one with you to support that need. You need to submit us a request in writing through your housing application, and then we also receive documentation from you and your medical provider. Our priority deadline for fall accommodations was May 15, however we will continue to work with you if you submit your request to us. You can work with my colleague Colleen Shaull - her email address is on the screen, and it is very important for you to note that university housing and dining, we handle your accommodations within housing, but if you are a student with a disability who needs accommodations
in the classroom related to a learning style, then you would work with student disability services. We do not share information between our two offices in order to maintain your privacy.

**Keniese:** So some housing and dining resources that we have for you as you live with us. We mentioned earlier the 146 RAs that we have working in our buildings across campus. So resident assistant is a member of each residence hall floor. They’re students just like you who have been carefully selected and trained to really assist you as you adjust in the halls until the university. So they are there to answer questions, facilitate programs, as well as conversations between you and them and others on the floor, give you resources, and make sure you have what you need to be successful here at the University. They also will have hall coordinators in this in the halls in order to further assist you. So if there is a question that an RA can't answer or just something that kind of escalates or higher level, we have hall coordinators. They’re professionals who have basically kind of gone to school to do this. So they live in the building they work in the building in there to support you in your success and in your engagement.

**Keniese:** In addition to those two resources, we also have two embedded counselors who are confidential resources for students and they offer a number of different things in order to kind of help you with maybe a crisis or just problem solving, some intervention. So they offer anything from individual therapy to group counseling and they can see you same day as a crisis and then they can do some intervention if you have things that happen around death or incident of bias, they are there to support you and offer that kind of resource. They also do some outreach programming where they can come into the halls and do things on mindfulness and self-care, coping with stress. So they’re really just an additional resource that we have that's really great for our halls, but they only see our students that live with us. They've been trained kind of traditionally any psychologists would, and they have connection to our University Counseling Services as well.

**Keniese:** So as Virginia mentioned, singles are hard to come back for a first year student and just really doesn't happen that all that often. So we try to give you some strategies for living with a roommate, so fun fact, most students, whether they are there in their first year or not, live with a roommate. So we really want to help you facilitate that relationship and make sure that the communication is really going to be key. So I'll take some time to get to know your roommate and let them get to know you. So ask questions, exchange information in the best way that's going to be for you are to communicate. At the beginning of the semester you're going to do a roommate agreement where you going to talk about when you want to study in the room, what your sleeping patterns are, what do you feel about guests, all of those that they take in. So making sure that you take that agreement pretty seriously and really write down how you feel about that for you as well as your roommate. This could be the first time that you're living in and sharing a space with someone else and that could be new in that be difficult. But if you communicate ahead of time it can prevent some of that stuff on the back end.

**Keniese:** Assume goodwill. So think that everyone kind of coming in with an open mind and ready to get along and really make it work, and as I said before your communication is going to be very important. So you want to make sure that you're talking with your roommate on the regular, that you are expressing your needs are your concerns. And if you do have an issue, that's what your RA's are there for. So if something comes up and you aren't able to handle it on your own, make sure you reach out to your RA and they can support you through that immediate any conflicts that come up.
**Virginia**: So once you in your roommate have selected a room for next academic year, you'll have the option to pick a meal plan and most students will be selecting a meal plan in June. There are three meal plan options and every student that lives in the residence halls is required to have at least one of these. And so the gold plan offers unlimited marketplace meals, 75 flex meals, and 8 guest meals. The black plan offers you 145 marketplace meals, 75 flex meals, and 8 guest meals, and then we have the Hawkeye plan, which is just for our students that have a university supplied kitchen and those students are the ones that often live in Mayflower Hall.

**Virginia**: The difference between our different types of meals. A marketplace meal is where you would enter into one of our all-you-care-to-eat locations. It’s like a buffet and you can just eat whatever you are hungry for at that moment. And so the number of meals is how many times you are able to enter into that marketplace. A flex meal is a meal that you could get either to-go from one of our retail locations or it also could be used in the marketplace. And so that can be a great option for students. Now if you’re trying to decide should I have the gold meal plan or the black meal plan? The recommendation that we often suggest is to determine will you be eating three meals a day or are you a student who typically only eats two meals a day.

**Virginia**: If you are not a breakfast eater, then the black plan is usually the best recommendation for you. However, if you were a student with a larger appetite or perhaps you'd like to eat frequently smaller meals throughout the day, the gold plan could be the best option for you. We know that it can be hard to decide until you're on campus, so during those first two weeks of you being on campus, you'll get the opportunity to adjust your meal plan as needed.

**Virginia**: If you if you are a student that may have unique dietary needs, perhaps you have allergies or need to avoid particular foods because of a medical condition, we have a great registered dietitian on our staff, her name is Laura Croteau and she is happy to meet with you one on one. She has a very simple form that you fill out and submit documentation about your needs and she can make arrangements for individual meals to be prepared a specifically for you. So that way you don't come in contact with something that you might be allergic to. We also have a really easy labeling system that displays on every food in our marketplace exactly what is in the food. So that way, you understand what you're going to be eating and putting into your body.

**Virginia**: Some anticipated costs for you to be aware of when, if you are living on campus, the total cost for the academic year is $10,284. This would be for a student in a double room with air conditioning, a student who has a black meal plan and then also has the 200 Hawkeye dollars and you are allocated 100 Hawkeye dollars in the fall semester and 100 Hawkeye dollars in the spring semester. So that way you have enough money to handle laundry or incidental purchases from our convenience stores. Your rate may increase or decrease depending on the room type that you select and based on the meal plan that you choose for yourself.

**Keniese**: Alright. So we have lots of different halls with lots of different amenities. So across campus and many of our buildings, you will find workout facilities, pool tables, table tennis, a computer room where you can do some printing while working on projects or papers that you may have for classes, study lounges so that could be a quiet study area or group study area if you need to get out of your room. All of our halls have a hall association which is a group of student leaders that come together and really are trying to impact change within the halls. So they meet the plans and social events. But also they bring
some of their larger concerns to our department administrator to say, hey, we have students that think that this is important for us right now. So they also have their kind of rally for their peers.

Keniese: The living learning communities that we talked about earlier, our dining locations are located in our halls, and all of our halls are conveniently located, whether that be on a certain side of the river or close to a bus stop, so you can use the campus system, our laundry facilities so that you can take care of your needs. Mail- so we are able to receive your package, so when you order something online or have something sent to you from a friend or family member, you are able to pick that up at our desk, and then some of our halls have board games and other outdoor yard games that you can check out for rental and use with your friends.

Virginia: As you’re planning your packing to come to the University of Iowa, our residence halls are completely furnished. So your room will come with a bed, a desk, a dresser, a set of drawers, and a closet space for you but you need to furnish or bring your belongings to fill that space. And so these are some recommendations that we have for you to purchase. We recommend that you bring your own bedding. We would not provide that for you, you should bring laundry detergent and perhaps a basket or bag to be able to get your laundry down to the washing machine easier, anything that you might need in the shower or for your daily toiletry routine, your academic supplies, will most certainly need pens and notebooks and your laptop computer, food and groceries and cooking pots and utensils if you are in a room with a university supplied kitchen, we provide with a stove and a refrigerator provided along with the sink but we do not provide you with cooking pots and pans. And then a couple of things that people find it helpful are to bring an Ethernet cord. We have Wi-Fi throughout all of our residence halls, but sometimes it’s just nice to plug in, and a desk lamp if you like a little bit different ambiance when you study.

Virginia: Some general recommendations that we want you to know about University housing and dining is that we have room for every new Hawkeye that would like to live in the residence halls. And so we’re very excited to have you join us on campus this fall. You will select your room in either a living learning community, and that took place last week, or in new student housing in that will take place in June. Your room selection timeslots will be determined on a first come first serve basis. And so we determine your time slot based on when you apply for housing. If you apply for housing back in December, then you would pick a room before someone who applies for housing in May. Your room assignment will be impacted by the Hawkeyes who applied for housing before you and we cannot guarantee you a room in a specific living learning community, but we will do our best to help you and your roommate get a room together.

Virginia: We absolutely encourage you to be flexible and open to a variety of experiences. Your number 1 building and your number 10 building could be fabulous opportunities for you to meet Hawkeyes from across the world.

Keniese: We also have some opportunities for you to join us on the UH&D team. So we have a lot of job opportunities within our department, whether that’s working at our front desk or working for dining. A lot of our students report that it’s a lot of fun and a great way for them to meet new people for peers or supervisors who have really become mentors for them. So it’s a really great opportunity for that the schedules are flexible as we work around your schedules for classes, and then if you were to work with dining you get a free meal when you work a shift. So that’s also a good plus if you’re thinking about
maybe getting one of those lower meal plans. If you go to work for dining, you would get a free meal every time that you work, which could be a nice bonus.

Frequently Asked Questions

Virginia: Now we're going to answer some of the frequently asked questions that international students tend to email our office about. And so the first one is who can live with University housing and dining? The answer to that is any undergraduate students who is over the age of 16, we ask that you be enrolled in at least 7 credit hours per semester. And it’s important to note that if you withdraw from the university, you would need to move out of the residence halls.

Virginia: The deadline to apply for living on campus. There’s a few different deadlines that are important to note. May 1 was the deadline that you need to tell us if you wanted to join the living learning community. May 31 is the deadline for you to tell us if you want to request a roommate for new student housing and we will leave our housing application open as long as we have space available. you may submit housing application before accepting your admission to the University. But as we opened our webinar there were some reminders about you submitting your documentation and your payments related to all of your visa that you need to come to campus. So make sure that you do that.

Keniese: So how can I request a room in ___ hall? So we aren't collecting that information of exactly what hall, what space, what room. So as Virginia stated your space in line basically is based on when you apply for house and where your application is. So when you open your application to go in to select a space, you’re going to see what's available to you in real time. So we won't be doing any of the picking for you, we’re going to allow you to pick what's available based on what you feel are your needs and where you want to live. We do get reports that students on the west side of campus have the highest satisfaction with their housing, but we have for sure students who live all across our campus.

Virginia: Occasionally people will ask us: is the housing application fee refundable? And the answer is no. This is a one-time, nonrefundable $75 charge to all new students that live in the residence halls. Now if you come back to live with us for a second year, you do not have to pay the housing application fee again, when you come on back. So there is an advantage to living on campus your second year.

Virginia: The other question that we will get sometimes is can I cancel my housing application? and the answer is yes. You can cancel it without financial penalty, up to 7 days after you received your official assignment letter, and that will come to you in either June or July. Now please note if you picked a living learning community room last week, then you've got your contract notification letter last night. And so your 7 days will be up next week. After this 7 days or your contract binding date, we will not release you from your housing contract without financial penalty. Your contract is for the full academic year, August until May, and if you do wish to cancel your housing contract you can do that on line in the upper right-hand corner of your application.

Keniese: Can I ship my belongings before I move in? We ask that you don't, as we have limited space behind our desks in each of our halls. So we are able to get packages that maybe books or maybe somewhat larger items. But sending all of your belongings, like for a whole room, would just be too much for our halls to take, so we ask that you either bring what you can and look into getting some of
those other things after you arrive, but don't ship very large items to our desks because they just can’t handle the size.

**Virginia:** So move in for you as an international student will be in August, Saturday August 11. We want you to come on this day so that way you are here early and on-time for ISSS orientation you would be assessed a fee of $135 for earlier arrival you do not have to pay that immediately, we will add that to your university bill.

**Keniese:** What is a pod style bathroom? So basically it's an individual use bathroom with the toilet, a sink, and a shower behind a lockable door. They located centrally and open for use by the entire hallway, and there's about five to 6 pods per floor, and they are cleaned by our staff daily. So our university housing and dining custodial staff will go in and clean those bathrooms when they're not in use. So this just as more of a private feature in bathrooms where you have everything you need behind a locked door.

**Virginia:** And now it's time for you to ask us some questions. We know that there have been a number of them coming through during the Web chat, so we will respond to those one at a time.

**Shuhui Lin:** Ok. And we'll go ahead answer the questions. If you have questions that you want us to answer live, please use the Q+A function to post your questions. And we will start with the ones that we have. So now first question what is the difference between university housing and the dormitory?

**Virginia:** University housing and dining is the dormitory. And so that's a good question. Because I know depending on which university or what college you are at, they call it different things, but a residence hall is a dormitory, so it's the same thing.

**Shuhui Lin:** What is the latest day to apply for housing?

**Virginia:** The latest date that you could apply for housing and still pick your own room is May 31, but i would recommend if you have not yet applied for housing that you apply today. If you apply for housing after May 31, you will not get the chance to pick your own room, but our staff will assign you. we will still have housing for you if you need to apply later.

**Shuhui Lin:** Next question is food-related. Which meal plan lets me use the food truck?

**Virginia:** All of the meal plans allow you to use the food truck because you would use a flex meal at the food truck. And I recommend the falafel, that's my favorite. What’s yours?

**Keniese:** Pulled Pork.

**Shuhui Lin:** Is Mayflower the only residence hall with a kitchen?

**Virginia:** No, it is not, but it is the largest residence halls where students have kitchens. There are only 6 rooms in Hillcrest where students have their own kitchen. So if you are interested in a room with a kitchen, Mayflower would be the best option for you.

**Shuhui Lin:** Next one is, can my family stay with me in the hall during orientation?

**Keniese:** Yes and no. We understand that sometimes there will be people joining you, and we allow for guests to stay with our residents in the hall, but not more than three days, that's typically what we like for people to have guests. Also keep in mind that your roommates are going to probably be moving
in at the same time and there's just a lot of things going on and a lot of situating. So we would suggest that if they're going to be here for an extended amount of time, maybe the full week of the orientation that you look into some of our nearby hotel options. A lot of them are close to campus or within the community where they can still be here to support you but just not be in the hall just because space gets limited in there's a lot going on during that time.

**Virginia**: Folks can typically only have one guest spend the night with them is that right?

**Keniese**: Yes.

**Shuhui Lin**: What is the best hall?

**Virginia**: That is a really difficult question in my opinion because I think that there are wonderful opportunities and advantages to all of them. It really depends on what you're looking for, but no matter which hall you end up picking the room in, you are certain to have the opportunity to connect with new people and to have a roommate, to have supportive staff, and to have lots of really fun events going on and people to help you get connected with the campus community. So I am not directly answering your question because I think that it really depends on what's going to be available at the time, I think all of them are wonderful.

**Keniese**: I think just like you said, they're all great options. They all offer something different and our staff really does a good job to make sure that they're invested in the people that live in the building. So I think that you'll have a great experience no matter where you live.

**Shuhui Lin**: Next question. How long does it take to get from one of the residence halls to classes?

**Keniese**: That depends on where you are, on which side of the river. We have our great busing system, our Cambus that's ran on campus that has stops right outside of, like directly outside of many of our halls, so typically if you are a kind of further away from some of your classes or just not really interested in walking, you can hop on one of those buses and get kind of across campus within 10 minutes, usually less, it takes about 6-8 minutes a lot of times. A lot of our other halls are about 15 minutes away from most of our buildings. So I think you can get from the furthest point to a class within about 15 minutes. So not too bad. But it really just depends on where you are and which building you’re walking to. I think our Cambuses offer a lot of opportunity for you to get there pretty speedily and on a regular basis, and you know, it's free.

**Shuhui Lin**: So we only have a couple questions left. If you still do have questions, please post them in the Q+A function. How safe are the residence halls? Is there a doorman?

**Keniese**: There are people who sit at the doors and monitor who comes in and out, but safety is one of our main priorities as we know that is something that will help you be more successful knowing that someone's looking out for your safety. So a lot of those staff members that I've talked about, a lot of their job is to make sure that the halls are safe. So it's something that the RAs do in all of the halls is they go on rounds every single night. There is someone always on duty for us, meaning someone carries a phone in response to emergencies, walks the halls, make sure things are going OK. We have a great partnership with our public safety, they sent staff over to walk the halls and monitor what's going on. We post a lot of things up about this is who you can call when you have this question at this concern.
Many of our desks are open 24 hours or later into the evening, so you will find the most desks are open till about 2 A.M. if they’re not open 24 hours. So we have a lot of staff in place make sure that you are safe and when safety is an issue, we want you to report that so that we can fix it.

Shuhui Lin: OK this seems to be the last question that we have for now. How can I be resident assistant next year?

Keniese: Yeah, that application process will come out typically within the fall semester, towards the end, so October, November time. And we want to allow the opportunity for you to apply and go through our interview process. So I would say look for that marketing information where we’re talking about how to apply, but also talk with your RA, our staff and they can make sure that you’re connected and know the process when it comes about. But we would love to have you on staff.

Shuhui Lin: Okay one question just came in. Is residence required for freshmen?

Virginia: No, it is not a requirement that you live on campus with the university housing and dining but 94 percent of first year students do live in the residence halls and now that we have all of the space available, many students are electing to return for a second and a third year. And so if you’re trying to decide should I live on campus or should I live off campus, we know that when you live on campus, especially your first and second year, you have a better transition into the university and you get better grades, which is awesome. So you graduate faster, get a job and you’d be amazing.

Shuhui Lin: So another question just came in. So this student as selected a room in Mayflower but then they realized it is the furthest one from campus. Can they still change their room selection?

Virginia: Yes, if they wish to cancel their room assignment in their living learning community, they can do so. There are instructions in their contract email that they got last night and they should reach out to us individually, and we will talk with them about their personal situation.

Shuhui Lin: So we will wait another minute to see whether there’s any other questions came in.

Virginia: I want to clarify for people who may be watching this webinar two or three weeks later, the option to cancel a room or to change your room may vary based on what time of year it is and where someone is with their housing contract process. So it’s always best to reach out to us individually with your full name and University ID number and we can see how we can support your needs to change a room assignment.

Shuhui Lin: One other question just came in. Can I live in the residence hallway with a spouse?

Virginia: Currently, we do not have housing for married students available. But there may be an option that we could offer help with. If a student is unable to live with us with their spouse, then I have some other housing options that I would recommend to them. Yes, especially if they are graduate or professional students. We have some great options here in Iowa City that I would recommend. Yeah, they can contact us individually.

Shuhui Lin: And we will also have an off-campus housing and living webinar next week. If you do need to live off campus, and that will be a webinar that you can tune in and listen to. So as we are waiting, I’m also going to post a short survey in the chat function for you to fill out and if you can take a minute to fill
out a survey that would provide us some really useful and helpful feedback to improve the Webinar series in the future.