Spring 2020 Pre-arrival Webinar Series:
On-Campus Housing and Off-Campus Living

Andrea: Hello and welcome to our spring 2020 pre-arrival webinar series for new students, international students arriving to the University of Iowa in the Spring 2020 semester. Today's topic that we're going to discuss and present about is on-campus housing and off-campus living.

Andrea: Little bit about the webinar series: this is a pre-arrival series, which is optional for incoming international students before they arrive in Iowa City. The objective of the series is to help your international students to arrange plans for travel to and living in Iowa City, to understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, and transition to student life and academics at the university of Iowa. We would like to note that all webinars are recorded and within about 10 or 14 days after a live broadcast are posted on our website and the link is provided here on the slide.

Andrea: During the webinar if you encounter any technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat function. If you have any questions related to today's topic and for our presenters today, please use the Q and A function to post your questions. We will answer them live at the end of the webinar as time permits. If you have not received your I-20 or DS 2019 document, please pay the e-ShipGlobal shipping fee so that the ISSS department can mail this document to you. Only if you have this document you can apply for your respective visa. This information is also contained in the pre-arrival checklist in iHawk; the website address is provided on the slide. If you have any questions or concerns about your immigration document, please contact our orientation team at ISSS-orientation@uiowa.edu.

Andrea: Some important dates: on October 1 is undergraduate admission acceptance deadline. Then on December 14 is the earliest day to arrive to Iowa City. January 12 is the latest day to arrive to Iowa City because on January 13 we start our mandatory orientation for international students. And it's going to be a joint orientation for both undergraduate and graduate students. And on January 21 starts our Spring 2020 semester.

Andrea: Let’s do presenter introductions.

Virginia: Hello everyone, my name is Virginia Ibrahim-Olin, and I’m a Director of Housing administration for university housing and dining and my pronouns of reference are she, her and hers.

Kendal: Hello everyone, my name is Kendal Arthur. I’m here with university housing and dining, I am a residence hall coordinator, my pronounce is he and his.

Amanda: Hello, my name is Amanda Elkins. I’m an attorney and the director of student legal services, and my pronouns are she, her, and hers.

Andrea: Hello, my name is Andrea Siebenmann, I am an ISSS advisor, and also the webinar moderator for today.

Andrea: Let's review quickly today's goals. We will provide an overview of University housing and dining services for undergraduate students including application timeline, dining options, facilities and more.
We will also learn about the advantages and disadvantages of living in privately owned housing located off-campus, and we will also learn about the best practices for obtaining off-campus housing, things to consider before signing a rental agreement, and ways to avoid potential pitfalls in the process. And again, at the end we will have time for a live question and answer.

Andrea: Let's begin our presentation.

Kendal: Yes, and so a little information about the University housing here at Iowa. Just to let you know what exactly... what you would be walking into is this. Here at Iowa, we have about 6,333 students living on campus. We have about 158 resident assistants, all very much there to assist you. Hopefully this presentation will give you a little more information about the RA position and what they do. We have 14 Living Learning Communities, 10 residence halls, 15 retail dining locations, three marketplaces, and one food truck. In this presentation, we will be giving you information, not only about housing but also food options, simply because we know those are your concerns here at University housing and dining.

Virginia: So our timeline for Spring 2020 applications and room assignments. In mid-October, the housing application will open and we will email all students who have been admitted to the University of Iowa for Spring 2020 to let you know that if you are interested, it is time to apply for housing. On December 15, we ask that you have let us know if you need an ADA, and that would stand for Americans with Disabilities Act. So if you are a student with a disability or need a medical accommodation, we'd like to hear from you by December 15. Then in late December we will email you room assignments to your @uiowa.edu email account. On January 11 is an early arrival date for you to come and get acclimated in order to be here in time for your orientation that begins on January 13. The rest of the students will move into the residence halls on January 18 and then folks will remain on campus until May 16, 2020.

Kendal: Now we mentioned about living learning communities. And so we're going to give you some information about those in case that is something that you're interested in. Living Learning Communities or LLCs are designated floors in our buildings where students live together based on academic interest or identity. LLC participants are generally enrolled in a course in common and events are planned ever so often to bridge academic and social connections between students and faculty. Now, you might be wondering why do we do this or why do we have LLCs on our campus? This is because research shows on students who get involved in LLCs are more likely to stay in college, earn a higher GPA, as well as experience a greater degree of satisfaction with the overall college experience.

Virginia: So residence halls at the University of Iowa have several different room types. And this is a listing of the most common ones that you would experience. A double room is a room shared by two students and they have a community or an individual bathroom down the hall. We will talk about our bathroom styles later in the presentation. A standard double is slightly smaller than a regular one. A double with pod configuration, what that means is, that's a room occupied by two students and they have an individual use bathroom down the hall and it's located in one of our newer buildings, either Petersen or Catlett. A suite-style room with shared bathroom and kitchen. This is a room that may be shared between 2, 3, or 4 different students. They all have a common bathroom and kitchen and students who live in these are eligible for our lowest meal plan, the Hawkeye plan. And then a triple room is just as it sounds there are three students that live there. So you would have two roommates, instead of just one. It’s important to note that single rooms or rooms with a private bathroom only
shared by you and your roommate are extremely limited on campus. These are not likely options for new Spring students.

**Kendal:** OK, now, looking at our meal plan options, on here, we’ll be talking a little about the different options here available on campus, just to let you know what’s out there, as well as, you know, what you would be getting for your money, depending on which option you choose. And the Gold plan is our unlimited plan, which basically means you’re able to eat as much as you can in the dining hall. With the Gold plan, you also get 75 Flex meals for the semester, 8 guest passes, and all for a cost of one thousand, eight hundred, and ninety dollars per semester. Alright, our next option is the Black plan. The Black plan gives you 145 meal swipes, thirty-five flex meals, as well as 8 guest swipes per semester, that costs one thousand and seven hundred and five dollars a semester. Now you might be wondering which one might be the best option for you. If you like to wake up early in the morning and like to have breakfast, the Gold plan might be the option for you. If not, you might want to consider the Black plan. Alright, and lastly, the Hawkeye plan is really our option for our students in Mayflower, I believe, so it does not include marketplace swipes, but you do get 75 flex meals for the cost of seven hundred and thirty-five dollars per semester. Now, we spoke earlier about Flex meals, so what I’m going to do is let you know exactly what those are, these are basically meals on the go that you can use at pretty much any retail location on campus. What you do is swipe your card and grab whatever you see there based on what they have available. Alright, you can go to different dining locations and let you know exactly what you’re going to get. Alright, we also understand sometimes that you might not know the plan that is best for you until you have that plan, so you are able to make changes as long as that change is done by January 31 of 2020 in the spring semester. Whatever is on your card after then is basically what you will be confined to until May checkout.

**Virginia:** So thinking about the overall cost of living on campus the rates here are provided for a full academic year, so those of you that would just be living with us for the Spring semester 2020, would just need to cut all of these rates in half, but you can see that we’ve got both double room and single room prices available to you for a more traditional residence hall room, Mayflower, and then our two new buildings in Petersen and Catlett. And these are again, the average price is because our most common room type is a double room, sharing with one other person. The black meal plan is what the most common one that students tend to take, although as Kendal mentioned, you may want to change it and you can certainly do that. And then we also provide you with something called Hawkeye Dollars, and what those are is, that is money that is put into an account that you can then utilize with your university ID to take care of laundry and incidentals or pay for items out of a vending machine.

**Virginia:** If you are a student with a disability who may need an accommodation or potentially support for your medical condition or medical equipment that you might utilize, we would be happy to work one on one with you to determine what your specific needs are. On the application, you will check a box to tell us, I might need an ADA or a medical accommodation, and then what you'll also do is submit a form to us. You will complete one part of that form, your medical provider will complete another part of the form, and then what you'll do then is work with our colleagues Vanessa who will review your information. In order for us to support you with the most variety possible, we would need to hear from you by December 15, 2019. It is very helpful for you to be aware that University housing and dining handles our housing accommodations separately than student disability services. And student disability services manages any accommodations that you might need in the classroom in order to be successful.
even with your disability. So please contact them if you think that you may need accommodations for your work in the classroom.

**Kendal:** So one thing we'd like to also share that with you is that is totally fine and OK if they see you need any assistance or support in the residence halls. We have quite a few staff members, some who live in the halls like you who are there to provide assistance. Alright, the first I would like to talk about are the RAs or Resident Assistants. A Resident Assistant is a member of each residence hall floor. RAs are student staff members who are carefully selected and trained. Their job is to assist their residents in adjusting to the halls and to the University of Iowa. So one of the things that they do is that they also plan events, come check-in on you just to make sure you’re doing okay, and they are very much an invaluable resource, so feel free to reach out to your RA once you get here in January. You also have hall coordinators like myself who are professionals that supervise the RAs. We also live in the building and are there to support student success and engagement. Lastly, in the event that, let’s say you go through a personal crisis, or you would like a professional to talk to, we do have embedded counselors as well in the halls. We have two of them, they don’t live on campus, but they are very much there as a confidential resource for students. Also we would like to let you know that they are free, so you don’t have to worry about how you’re going to have to pay. All you need to do is make an appointment and they would be happy to support you.

**Virginia:** So I can provide a little bit more information about what our embedded therapist do. They can provide you individual counseling or psychotherapy sessions. They do group offerings, so that way you might meet with several other students to try to better understand yourself. They offer crisis and problem-solving counseling, and then if there is a major event on campus that a variety of students would need support for, they certainly will come into our residence halls and offer counseling in the moment. Our counselors again are free and available to all the students who live in the residence halls and if you choose to live off campus you still have access to free counseling provided through the University Counseling Services and they have offices located across campus in several buildings.

**Kendal:** Now, we know because single rooms are not too common on campus, most people end up having at least one roommate. So we know sometimes, if you’ve never shared a room with someone, that can be very daunting or even scary, but that’s okay. So the tips we would like to share with you are as follows. Get to know your roommate for who your roommate is, their name, their interests, and etc. just so that you can start building that connection. Take the roommate agreement very seriously. Once you get here in the Spring semester, the RAs will be stopping by to have a roommate agreement with you to have a conversation and let you guys know what’s allowed, what’s not allowed, just to set up some ground rules in that room. Make sure you take it very seriously so that the roommate agreement can work for you. Always assume goodwill. No one is there to get you in trouble. They are all there to very much assist you. So please make sure that you always remember that. And lastly, communication is important. If there is something that is affecting you, that’s okay, just please let us know and we’ll be more than happy to support you, as well as absolve that problem. If you are not able to solve the issue on your own, talk to the RA on your floor for support as well as for mediation, they’re there to assist you as well, all you need to do is just reach out to them.

**Virginia:** So we want to provide some information about our buildings. The residence halls are open to students of any gender and some of our buildings are organized into floors by gender, and so there might be one floor entirely of women and then another floor entirely of men, but all of our buildings are
mixed. And so those buildings that have single gender floors or wings are Burge, Currier, Hillcrest, and Rienow Halls. We also have many buildings that have mixed gender floors and that arrangement is where there is one room on the hallway that may have men in it and then the next room across from it could have women living in that room. Those buildings are Catlett, Daum, Mayflower, Petersen, Stanley, and Slater. All students are typically assigned a roommate with the same gender at that they have, and all of our buildings provide privacy in using the restroom, whether that be in the community style restrooms or in the single user restrooms which will we’ll talk about next.

Kendal: Yes, so as Virginia said, we have a variety of bathroom styles on campus. So we’d like to give you a little more information on that. That way, you know what to expect depending on where you choose to live. We have suite-style, and firstly I would like to start with our community style showers, or our community style bathrooms. These pretty much have locked access, are single-gender, and are shared between 12-15 people on the floor. In there, you’ll find a washroom, a row of toilets, a row of sinks, and a row of showers, and these options you find typically in our larger halls like Burge, Currier, Hillcrest, and Rienow. The next option we have is called single-user pod-style. So these all have locks to secure yourself as soon as you get in there. They cater to anyone of any gender. They’re shared between 12-15 people on the floor, using one person at a time. In there, in every single room you’ll find one sink, shower, and toilet, and these are typically found in Catlett, Daum, Petersen, Slater, and Stanley halls.

Alright, now in Mayflower, that’s the one where you have suite-style bathrooms, so generally you would find the suite-style shared between 2-4 students, and in them there you have two sinks, one shower, and one toilet. Alright, so please make sure that you remember that in case you are curious about what types of things to expect or where you choose to live.

Virginia: As you’re planning your arrival for January, we want to make sure you're aware of all the different room furnishings that are provided and the residence hall rooms come fully furnished with a bed, a dresser, and a desk. They come with recycling containers, you have the option to acquire a landline telephone, although we know most people are using mobile phone for these days. We also have Ethernet and we have Wi-Fi in all of the residence halls also available for you. And then if you're interested in having a cable in a TV jack, you could certainly watch TV, you just have to bring your own. We have a full listing of what to bring, broken down by clothing including your personal and toiletry items on our website, if you just go to housing.uiowa.edu/what-to-bring , it will give you everything that you might want to consider having with you.

Kendal: OK. So now that we’ve given you a little more information about housing and dining here on campus we want to give you a little more, a few tips on just the application process in terms of what to expect. Please remember that rooms are selected on a first come, first served basis generally you may be impacted by those who submitted applications before you, so that being said, we recommend you to submit, complete your application and pay your fee as fast as possible, so hopefully you can get the option that you most interested in. We encourage you to be flexible and open to multiple options. That’s because our halls are so different and they offer so many different amenities, some halls and some rooms tend to be more popular than others, and so it might be possible that you might not get your first option. And that’s OK just make sure you look at others, that way you have a room to come to on campus when you get here in January. All roommate relationships take time and communication. That’s because sometimes you might not be living with someone you necessarily know and that’s OK, as long as you get to know them you will be able to develop a very positive living situation. Another thing I
recommend is that you submit an application on your own and you communicate directly to University housing and dining. Because you are the one living here, we want to make sure that we are tailoring your experience to you, so unless you are doing it yourself, we won’t necessarily know how to best support you. Alright, but nonetheless, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to us and one of our representatives would be more than happy to assist you as soon as they get that alert.

Virginia: And so if you’re interested in talking with one of our staff members, our office is open from 8-5 Monday through Friday. You are certainly welcome to call or email, we know that tends to be easier. We typically respond to most people within 24 to 48 hours over a business day. And if you happen to be on campus and want to meet with someone one-on-one, we typically are able to have a staff member present to meet with you between 8:30-4:30 PM. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Amanda: Hey again everyone, this is Amanda Elkins. I’m the attorney and the director of student legal services. I’m going to talk to you today about living off-campus, and so we’ll talk about the pros and cons of living off-campus, the advantages and disadvantages. We’ll talk about how to find an apartment and how to live in that apartment basically. So first off the advantages of living off-campus. First, you’re going to have more options for types of housing. There’s going to be more options, if you’d like to live by yourself or if you’d like to have a private bedroom that you don’t share with another person. It’s possible that you could save money, that compared to living on campus, it really just depends on the type of apartment or house or townhouse that you select. There may be increased availability for parking. Parking can be difficult to find on campus at times, many apartment buildings include parking or will allow you to pay for parking and be given an assigned parking space. If you are planning to bring your family with you especially children, then living off campus is probably a better option for you. That being said, there are disadvantages to living off-campus. First is a risk of low-quality housing and lack of responsive maintenance. If you live on campus and you have a question or you need assistance, you have resident advisors and hall coordinators and housing and dining staff who maintain the property but also can likely respond more quickly to your concerns.

Amanda: There’s also the disadvantage with respect to the cost of the units because usually you’ll be paying a monthly rental amount, you’ll have to provide a security deposit to cover any damages you might cause, there could be increased transportation costs on if you live far away from campus, you may be paying for utilities, including water and electric and cable and Internet, where you wouldn’t be paying those if you lived on campus. And then roommate problems. So again, one of the challenges of living off campus is that you don’t have as much on campus, you wouldn’t have on campus support through a resident assistant, although you’re always welcome to come to our office if you have legal questions.

Amanda: For finding an apartment, we recommend that you first consider the cost of renting and whether it is financially a good decision for you. We would like you to read the entire lease before you sign it. The lease is a written contract between you and the owner of the property about the terms and conditions of living at their unit. There’s a couple of different kinds of leases in Iowa City, the most common is called joint and sever liability. And what that means is that you are financially responsible for your roommate. So if your roommate does not pay the property owner their fair share of the rent, then you are required to pay for them, and this can obviously cause some conflict. There is another type of lease called individual leases where you live with another person, but you don’t share finances. So you
each pay a monthly rental fee to the landlord directly. So you have to
decide what works best for you. We would like you to look at the
apartment or the rental house before you sign. I know you know that can
be difficult for those of you who may not be getting to Iowa City right away
but if possible you should ask maybe a friend, a future coworker, someone who would be willing to
actually go to the apartment or the rental unit and look at it to make sure it's in good condition. Once
you get to Iowa City, you are welcome to bring your lease to our office and a lawyer will review it with
you and answer questions that you have. You do need to call in advance to schedule an appointment at
our office. If possible we recommend that you talk to people who have lived in the apartment before, or
who live in the same building, because will be able to give you information about the neighbors, about
working with the owner or whether it's a noisy place or whether parking is easy to find, and then lastly
we suggest that you check the rental permit. So if you're going to be living in a rental unit in Iowa City,
you can go to the housing inspectors website to the city of Iowa City and you'll be able to find a report of
any recent maintenance issues or repairs that the owner had to make in order to be in compliance with
the housing laws.

_**Amanda:**_ So signing a lease. As I mentioned a lease is a contract is written in its legally binding. And so
what that means is once you sign, you're locked in. The landlord expects you to move into the
apartment and expects you to pay money every month. It's not the type of thing that you can just
change your mind about and there can be serious financial consequences if you decide not to move into
an apartment or you decide if you don't like it and you want to move out early. We recommend that you
sign the lease at the same time as your roommates, if possible. You should get a copy of the signed
document for your records because if you ever have questions about your lease, the first thing you
should do is read your lease to see if that's covered. Maybe the landlords doing something incorrectly,
but you wouldn't know that if you didn't have the written agreement. Likewise, if you would like me or
someone at my office to read the lease or answer your questions, I need to see what we’re talking
about. I need to see the agreement that you have with the owner. Another tip is to consider living alone.
The reason for that is because sometimes when there is a difference of opinion or you have a difficulty
with the person that you're living with, being able to live by yourself, and it maybe a one bedroom
apartment, can save you some of those troubles. And then lastly for this slide is to never sign an
incomplete lease. Sometimes these documents can be multiple pages long and sometimes they'll say,
well, there is an addendum or there’s an addition to the lease, and you want to make sure that you see
that, and you agree with that. Another thing I wanted to mention is that, if you, let's say you think the
rent is too high, that the rental amount is too high you can ask a landlord or a property owner to change
the terms of the contract. You're allowed to ask, and they may be willing to do that. And if they are, you
should write it down as opposed to just having a verbal agreement. If there's something you don't like
about a particular apartment, you don't have to sign the first lease that you see. It's OK to look at
multiple units or consider multiple leases. It's really about finding what you're comfortable with.

_**Amanda:**_ Before you move into your apartment or when you move into your apartment, we
recommend that you purchase renters’ insurance. It’s similar to car insurance, which, car insurance is
required here in Iowa if you have a vehicle and you'll be driving a vehicle. Renter’s insurance is not
required but it is strongly recommended and that would cover a situation where maybe you will
accidentally have a small kitchen fire or there's water damage. Renter’s insurance would pay for those
damages. It would also help you in situations where maybe your next-door neighbor had a fire, or the
landlord, or something broke because a pipe was old and it broke. Renter’s insurance provides coverage and can help you replace your items. We strongly recommend that you complete a move in checklist. And this is a document where you write down the condition of the unit before you move in. If the property owner also called the landlord doesn't provide you a checklist you can use one that’s available on our website. And so what we want you to do is go through your apartment and see if there is a hole in the wall, is there a tear in the carpet, is there a stain, is something not clean, we want to write those things down because we don't want the landlord to blame me for them. We want you to only be held responsible for things that you caused. Along the same lines, you should take pictures and video of your unit, again to document the condition of what it looks like on the day you moved in, and then you'll need to check your lease to see what utilities you have to pay. Some landlords cover some of the utilities, some utilities are paid directly to the landlords, and some are paid directly to the utility companies. So that it's typically water and then the electric bill. And so the water company is the city, the of city of Iowa City and the city of Coralville, which is right next to Iowa City and then the energy company is called Mid-American energy. And I believe that contact information is on our website for you if you need to call and set that up to make sure that you have those things ready when you move in.

Amanda: While you’re living in the apartment, really think of it as your home and how you would treat it if you owned the place or if you are living with your family, for example, so you should clean regularly. It’s basically your job to keep the apartments in the condition that you found it in. Now, obviously it’s not going to look exactly the same because you’ve been there for years, but clean regularly. If you and your roommate maybe want to have that agreement where you are in charge of the kitchen and they’re in charge of vacuuming, you could make up an agreement between roommates. You should always pay your rent on time. Rent money is going to be due on the first of the month and how do you pay your rent money depends on the agreement that you have. Sometimes you have to mail in a check, sometimes you can go into the office to pay, sometimes you can pay online. That differs depending on the contract. If there is ever a time you are living in your apartment and something breaks or you have a leaky faucet or let’s say there is a rainstorm and then there’s water leaking inside or a window gets damaged by the weather, you should contact your landlord right away. And you can again... how do you contact your landlord depends on your written contract. Sometimes you can call them, you could text them, you could email them, or they might have a way to report it via their website. Maybe most importantly is that if you’ve never been to Iowa before, or even parts of the United States that get very cold in the winter, if you're going to let’s say you're going to be gone for a weekend in January after you've got here, do not turn the heat all the way off. You could turn it down to maybe 55 or 60 or 65 degrees Fahrenheit, but if you turn the heat all the way off during the winter months, the water pipes can freeze and they can break and it causes a lot, a lot, a lot of damage.

Amanda: Alright, moving out. Most leases end in mid to late July. So you need to clean the apartment or the rental unit, this applies to houses, condos, townhouses, any type of rental unit. Again, your job is to put it back in the condition that you found it in. You should take pictures of the good condition that you left your apartment in. You need to let your landlord know what a new address for you is, because at the beginning of your lease you pay a deposit to the landlord, and that is money that they hold on to and they get to keep if you’ve damaged the property. However, if you haven't damaged the property, and you’ve documented that you have not damaged the property, they will send you the money back and they need to know where to send it. There’s a lot more information about renting on our website,
and that's listed there. I do want to mention that even though today, we're only talking about living off-campus, our office can answer all kinds of legal questions that you have while you are a University of Iowa student. We give you free legal advice while you’re a student on a variety of issues including divorces, immigration, contract review, if you have questions about our alcohol laws in Iowa and the United States, if you want to go to court, if you believe someone owes you money, if you ever need a notary. So a notary is someone who signs official documents for you, we can do all of those things for you without charge.

**Q&A Part**

**Andrea:** OK. Thank you so very much to our presenters providing very detailed information about the housing options for our new students who will be arriving for the spring semester. And now we’re in to our Q&A or question and answer time and again, I would like to encourage you to post any questions that you may have for our presenters so that they can answer those live for you. We do have a few questions here that we would like to begin asking. So there is a question about a student who is trying to decide which residence hall is closest to their classes. How did they go about that?

**Virginia:** Sure. So students who apply for housing will be assigned a room in the order in which we receive their application and it will truly depend on where we have space available for the spring semester. Right now, we have many students living in our residence halls but many will also choose to study abroad, you all are, so that will create some openings in the spring. When we get to you to assign your room we will do our best to take into account your preferences, and on the application, you'll be asked what are your room type preferences. And so we’ll assign you based on what's available at that time. We have students who live all over campus, most of the residence halls are in within a quick 10 to 12-minute walk from the classroom buildings, so you're never far from where you'll need to be, and you could always stop on the cambus too, if you would prefer not to walk.

**Andrea:** Thank you so much. Then the next question was about dining: Can I eat at the dining hall if I don't live in the dorms?

**Kendal:** Definitely. Something that’s open to all of our students is, if let’s say you want to be able to eat in there, all you need to do is simply go to the front and use either a major credit or debit card, and that’s something that could easily work for you. Our retail options are also open, if, let’s say, that’s something that you’re interested in. They also take credit cards and debit cards as well.

**Virginia:** If you decide that you want to eat on campus on a regular basis and you happen to be living off, you could purchase any of the meal plans as a student or a staff member.

**Andrea:** Excellent, thank you. The second question for this: Is there a halal meal option available at the dining hall?

**Virginia:** We do have certain halal offerings and all of our food on campus is labeled with the main allergens that you may come in contact with. So that way if you do happen to have a food allergy, you know. If you are interested in halal meat and you’re having something prepared you just have to ask one of the chefs and they can help you acquire that.
Andrea: Excellent, thank you. The next question is about availability of the housing during the summer. If students, international students typically, stay in town, if they don't travel, they stay in town and they’re asking whether they could live on campus during summer.

Virginia: So all students are welcome to live on campus in the summer. If you are registered for at least one credit of classes or are taking part in research on campus, you would be eligible to live in the residence halls. Otherwise another option that you may want to consider would be to sublet from someone off-campus who does not, will not be here for the summer. But you'll want to make sure to connect with student legal services and make sure that you are legally subletting that apartment. Pay very close attention to the dates in the summertime.

Andrea: Perfect. Thank you so much. The other question, since we're speaking about the residence halls, is about the parking. Is there parking available near by the residence halls? Is it free or for a fee, or how does that work?

Kendal: So we do have parking available but, as far as, you know, the residence halls are considered, not all of our parking is going to be right by there. Once you register your car and you settle for a parking permit, you will get more information on that. And so unfortunately, it’s not free, alright? And that’s one of the reasons that we always tell students that if it’s a thing where you might not be using your car, it might not be smart to have a car. In Iowa (City) there are places where you can walk to, and we also have a free cambus as an option as well. Now if you’re staying off-campus, that might become a very different situation because not many things may be close to you. It all depends on your lifestyle as well as what you can afford.

Andrea: And cambus is the campus bus.

Kendal: Yes, so cambus is our campus shuttle. It’s free, it’s open to the public, it runs 7 days a week. So if you need to get anywhere across campus you can easily hop on it, and so we have bus stops all over the campus. If you need to know when the next bus comes, if you have a smartphone, you could simply download the BONGO app, and it will give you live updates on the next bus that’s coming your way.

Amanda: But if I could add to that, if you're living off-campus, the city of Iowa City and the city of Coralville also have buses. I ride the Coralville bus. I like it an awful lot. And you can... those buses are not free, but they have reduced rates for faculty, staff and students. I think right now I pay about $15 a month... I believe that's the price and that covers Coralville and Iowa City and you just get one bus pass. So that's something to consider if you're going to be living off campus. It's a fairly bus-friendly town.

Virginia: I would definitely caution from bringing a car or acquiring one right away until you get used to the campus area. We do have parking near one of our residence halls, but other than that, student parking on campus in general and parking for all of us is very limited, so riding the bus is a great tip.

Kendal: I think, depending on your ability, I know some students have found it easier to use bikes. So bikes are always very helpful. One thing I can say is all of our halls have bike racks, a lot of our academic buildings also have bike racks. So it’s easy for you to ride from building to building, you should be able to chain up your bike. A bike might be a little bit easier than to have a car to ride around.
Andrea: Excellent. Thank you so much, this was wonderful. Probably more than this student was asking, but it's excellent to provide those options and think about it ahead of time. One question that came from the participating students is about the length of the contract in the residence halls and they say whether it's even a possibility that they could change their mind in the middle of the school year, the contract, because it sounds like for the whole year it maybe a long time. Can you chime in please?

Virginia: So our house in contracts for students who live on campus, they typically run from August until May, or if you're a new student joining us in the Spring, your housing contract will start in January and then run until May. Your housing contract is officially sent to you with your room assignment. And when you get that housing contract via email, you have 7 days to decide whether yes, I want to keep my housing contract, or no, I want to cancel it and you can cancel for any reason without financial penalty. After that 7-day contract binding date, is what we call it, after that 7 day period you may cancel your housing contract, but there will be a fee associated with that, and the full details about that fee can actually be found in your housing contract itself. Now, say you get here in you decide that your residence hall room is not working for you. We do allow students to change their rooms, so you don't have to cancel your entire contract, you could just move to a different room down the hall or into another building as space may allow.

Andrea: Excellent. Let's hope that that helps the student to understand what the obligations are once they sign the contract. Since we were talking about bikes, there was a question about whether a student can ride a bike during winter in Iowa.

Kendal: I think depends on what you're comfortable with, maybe. I wouldn't say, necessarily, yes or no, just because of what you are comfortable with. You might just want to avoid the hills that might be just a bit dangerous, but other than that, it's totally fine.

Amanda: It depends on the tires you have, too. I mean, just be careful of certain intersections, get a helmet, those types of things. But I definitely do see people riding bicycles in the winter.

Andrea: Excellent. Thank you so much. And we have a one more question I believe regarding the landlords and the off-campus housing related. So do the landlords provide their leases online?

Amanda: Some do. If they don't, you should ask for a copy. If the landlord doesn't want to provide a copy to you, that should be kind of a warning that, why would they not want to give you a copy of the contract ahead of time? So some do, you should definitely ask for a copy, and if they are giving any trouble or you don't like the response that they give, I would suggest looking elsewhere.

Andrea: Great. Thank you. And then in terms of off-campus housing, can we provide an idea what is the average cost of utilities?

Amanda: That's a tough question because it really depends on the size of the unit, and sometimes it's an older home, that's been broken up into rental units, that can be more expensive, you should ask the landlord. Or you should see if they will give you the contact information for a person who lives in the building or someone who's lived in the apartment before. They may give you a general idea, I think. I mean, we're not talking hundreds and hundreds of dollars. I think a water bill for one person could be 20 to 25 dollars. As far as the power or the electric goes, it really depends on you know if they get a very cold winter, or very hot summer. The electric bill it is going to be more expensive than the water bill.
Andrea: Thank you so much. And I am sharing here very quickly in the chat function a request for the quick filling out the quick survey from today's webinar, so please go ahead and help us fill out this web survey so that we know how we did and whether you have any suggestions for any other topics that should be covered. And other than that we are done with today’s webinar, we don’t have any other questions that we can see, let me check again. Yeah, I think we answered everything. Oh. There was one question whether the presentation will be shared after the webinar and how they can access the PowerPoint. As was mentioned at the very beginning of this webinar, we are recording it and so we will be posting the recording within about 10 to 14 days at the max on our website. And we will let when that’s happening. So that you can go back and review the recording and also we are going to provide a text version of everything that was said today. So you will have the chance to look at it as a word or a text document as well. So, you will see that presentation again as a recording afterwards.

Andrea: So just a couple of reminders before we’re done for today. If you have any questions about the pre-arrival checklist or any other issues that are related to your pre-arrival, or arrival to Iowa City and the University of Iowa, please contact us at the email provided on this slide. And that goes directly to our orientation team. And they will be happy to address your concerns or questions. And then a secondly, we would like to point you to our website that is dedicated specifically to new International students with additional resources and you will find this very helpful. There are lots of topics, lots of different suggestions and tips and again web link is provided on the slide here. And then finally, we would like to invite you to follow our next webinars there are going to happen in October and November. And the next webinar is on University MyUI system as well as ISSS iHawk system and then we will talk a little bit about travel arrangement tips. And this webinar is going to be on October 11. Again, you’re welcome to join us and register for this webinar. And then I would like to also mention that we have three prerecorded already on our website and you are welcome to view those at your leisure or time that works for you. And again, these webinars cover different topics that we will not have chance to cover live this semester, so you’re welcome to look at those and hopefully they will give you more information on different topics. So again, thank you so much for attending today’s webinar and we look forward to having you join us in our next webinar on October 11. Thank you and goodbye.