

A Residence Hall for the Next Generation

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Abstract

Students go through a transition during the years of college. They enter as adolescents and exit as adults. During these years, students should have a living environment that will keep them safe, healthy, and encourage them to maintain a balance between work and life. Creating a safe space for students is especially important for those who belong to various groups based on race, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The living environment should encourage students to be who they are and who they want to be without fear. Students also need to have a healthy body throughout college to go with their healthy mind. Taking care of one's body in college can be challenging involving nutrition, exercise, maintaining allergies, and avoiding toxicity. Students need to learn how to maintain a work-life balance to decrease stress. Lastly, students need to manage time well to be productive in their work and have time for leisure. The transition to adulthood can be made easier with a supportive environment. The result will also contribute to a high quality freshman experience, attracting better students and improving retention.

The aim of this study is to find out how freshmen residence halls can facilitate creating a safe space, maintaining health and wellness, and creating a work-life balance through architectural design. This will be accomplished through two methods: literature review and precedent study. Since the knowledge of what makes a good residential hall isn't new, there is considerable research literature on the subject. The review delves into the three main topics. In regards to safe space, issues of gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and race are studied and how the respective campuses have addressed them. For maintaining health and wellness, issues of nutrition, exercise, allergies, and toxicity are studied. Lastly, for creating a work-life balance, topics of productivity, leisure time, and support for students through living-learning communities are studied. The precedent study focuses on universities' dormitories that relate issue-wise to the literature study.

All of these findings will be used to design a residence hall in the University at Buffalo: a freshmen residence hall for the next generation. The UB 2020 master plan to renovate the campus includes building three residence halls along Lee Road. One of these sites will be chosen for the design. This project will feature different styles of rooms for students of diverse personalities, backgrounds, and preferences. This includes their own definition of privacy, community, and convenience. The study will identify strategies to improve freshmen housing in universities to better prepare freshmen students for the years ahead.

Literature Review

Introduction:

Although the need to house students is an important function of residence halls, it is not the most important reason for investing institutional resources in these facilities. If the only purpose of residence halls was to house students, off-campus apartment owners could do it equally well and with less cost. Organizing the peer environment in residence halls as a means of facilitating various aspects of students' cognitive and psychosocial growth and development is the principal reason for investing institutional resources in college residence halls. This includes diversity through means of a safe environment, a healthy zone for students, and helping students juggle their school work and free time easily.

Creating a Safe Space in Colleges through Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, Religion, and Race

For many people, the terms “gender” and “sex” are used interchangeably. This has become so common, particularly in western societies, that it is rarely questioned. We are born, assigned a sex, and sent out into the world. For many people, this is cause for little, if any dissonance. Yet biological sex and gender identities are different; gender is not inherently nor solely connected to one’s physical anatomy. It is amazing that we are now in a society that encourages people to be who they are especially in college. In college, people don’t have to be afraid to show who they are and colleges are taking this into consideration in regards to certain processes. Beginning in the 2016/2017 academic year, both the Universal College Application and the Common Application changed the question of an individual’s sex on its standardized form to “legal sex” as well as adding an optional field for an applicant to note their gender identity (Hammond, 12).

Sexual orientation is the term used to describe what gender(s) someone is sexually and/or romantically attracted to. We live in a time where people are more than accepting of who people love, knowing that it isn’t a choice. Colleges support this by supporting LGBT communities. However, there are always going to be people who are homophobic. Colleges nationwide are establishing separate dorms for gays, not only as a haven from homophobic students, but also to guard against emotional stress gay students face in mixed living quarters. (Menashi, 2000)

There are many religions throughout the world. Many colleges these days have students from many different countries and thus different religions. Colleges allow students to freely practice their religion by offering religious accommodations. At the University at Buffalo for example, these include: time away from the classroom or workplace to pray, or for religious holidays, alternative times for examinations or work shifts, permitting religious expression that does not interfere with the classroom or work environment, and ensuring that rules and policies regarding dress and grooming requirements allow reasonable religious-based exceptions. Religious differences, like political differences, affect all of American higher education but Christian colleges and universities. “Colleges with a distinct religious identity are flourishing these days. Structures, limits, and clearly articulated values provide a behavioral exoskeleton for many students who would flounder in a more permissive environment.” (Miller, 2006)

At the University at Buffalo, more than half of the students that come from the United States are Caucasian at 56.9%. Second are Asian students at 16.9%, third are African-American students at 8.8%, fourth are Hispanic at 7.6%, and so on. Although racial segregation is not legal, there are still instances where it occurs due to lack of racial awareness on campuses. In some cases, minority students separate themselves. Ethnic-themed dorms offer a supportive environment for minorities, but some people say they stunt personal growth by promoting self-segregation" states on this as a student at Cornell University didn't want to risk being the only African-American student in a hall or floor because he grew up in Black neighborhoods. (Lum, 2008)

Keeping up with College Students Health and Wellness Using Nutrition, Exercise, Allergies, and Toxicity

Almost a third of college students are obese, placing them at risk for adult obesity and its complications. In order for students to get to maintain a healthy lifestyle, they need to eat a nutritious diet. Between full-service dining hall meals, the campus sundae bar, late-night food delivery, and cheap ramen, it's easy for college students to lose control of their diets and gain the infamous Freshmen 15. While it is important for the student to make their own choices, it is also equally important for college dining halls to offer healthy nutritious food to encourage and inspire students to eat right. A detailed, observational assessment had been done of food and beverages available in college-student dormitory rooms. The findings from this study indicated that students maintain a wide array of food and beverages in their dormitory rooms. The foods observed in college students' living spaces may have an important impact on eating habits. Overall, young adult-oriented obesity prevention efforts are needed, and improving the various facets of campus food environments may mark an important component of such strategies. (Nelson et al, 2009)

The internet use may be one factor contributing to college student obesity. Another is the food students eat on a daily basis. However, a regular exercise program would help students not only maintain their weight, but also keep them fit and in shape. The issue of whether or not differences in health-related physical fitness exist among people with different leisure lifestyles was conducted in a study. The results indicated that college students who routinely engage in exercise tend to have physical fitness superior to those who do not exercise on a regular basis and thus have healthier lives. (Cheng, Jen-Son, et al, 2011)

Lack of a good nutritional diet and exercise routine aren't the only things that can cause a decrease in students' health. The residence hall that they live in needs to be just as healthy. This includes dampness, mold, ventilation, or even the crowdedness within a dorm room. A nested case-control study on 348 college students was carried out in 2006-2007 at Tianjin University, China to study the associations between dorm environment and occupants' health. Measured variables in the experiment were ventilation rate, air temperature, and relative humidity indoors. It was concluded that ventilation rate is an effect modifier for moisture problems and indoor pollutants. (Sun et al, 2011)

Toxicity is defined to the degree to which a substance (a toxin or poison) can harm humans or animals. Acute toxicity involves harmful effects in an organism through a single or short-term exposure. When students leave their family home, they independence, but they also need to develop self-control. Harmful and underage college drinking are significant public health problems, and they exact an enormous toll on the intellectual and social lives of students on campuses across the United States. A

study examined caloric restriction among students prior to planned alcohol consumption. The results suggested a need for modifications to existing alcohol education and prevention programs to include important health information. Just because they can, doesn't mean they should. (Burke et al, 2010)

Creating a Work-life balance among College Students by Managing Time, Leisure, and Living-Learning Communities

Students can become overcommitted due to classes, work, and extracurricular activities. Learning to manage time well will help student to be productive in work and reduce stress. New media provide college students with an unprecedented number of ways to spend their unstructured time. A survey of college students suggested that users are aware of overuse of leisure media because of deficits in self-control, in particular two proximate media experience (social networking sites [SNS] and online video). Of these, however, only online video viewing was associated with less time spent on schoolwork. Though this study is correlational and thus does not definitively establish causality, the evidence suggests that the interaction between the high-choice media environment and users' self-control may account for a decline in learning among college students. (Panek, 2013)

It's an unrealistic expectation to think that students can study, go to class, and work all day, every day. Students' brains need a break, too. They should make sure to allow themselves time to go to something fun in the quad, attend a meeting for their favorite club, and just hang out for an hour or so at night with friends over dinner. Doing things that make personal time more enjoyable—and not totally focused on school—can actually improve productivity when working on projects later and decrease levels of stress. Studies investigated the interrelationship among academic stress, anxiety, time management, and leisure satisfaction among 249 university undergraduates by age and gender. Anxiety, time management, and leisure satisfaction were all predictors of academic stress in this multivariate analysis. Anxiety reduction and time management in conjunction with leisure activities may be an effective strategy for reducing academic stress in college students. (McKean, 2000)

Living learning communities are dormitories where the residents are selected typically based on majors or interests. If a student chooses to join one, they'll be surrounded by peers that are similar to them in at least one way. These can help people make friends. They also would have classes in common. Roommates are chosen by major. Additionally, these communities can help freshmen assist each other. The development of the typology of living-learning programs and demonstration of its use in the assessment of students' learning outcomes had been studied. It revealed that students in the large academic affairs/student affairs collaborations and small residential life-based living-learning program types exhibited stronger self-reported learning outcomes than those in the medium combination programs. (Inkelas et al, 2008)

Methods and Procedures

The precedent study consists of three different kinds of precedents. These three address the main issues in residence hall design: safe space, health and wellness, and work-life balance. Additionally, each of these studies include the University at Buffalo, the future site of the project, to study its own views on each issue.

The first method, creating a safe space, will focus on gender inclusive housing. By definition, gender inclusive housing is a housing option in which two or more students share a multiple occupancy apartment or suite regardless of students' sex, gender identity or gender expression. Using a list compiled by Campus Pride, an organization which represents the leading national nonprofit organization for student leaders and campus groups working to create a safer college environment for LGBTQ students., 204 universities/colleges were identified of offering gender inclusive housing.

Out of these 204 schools, 131 have this type of housing available for freshmen at 64%, while 73 schools do not.

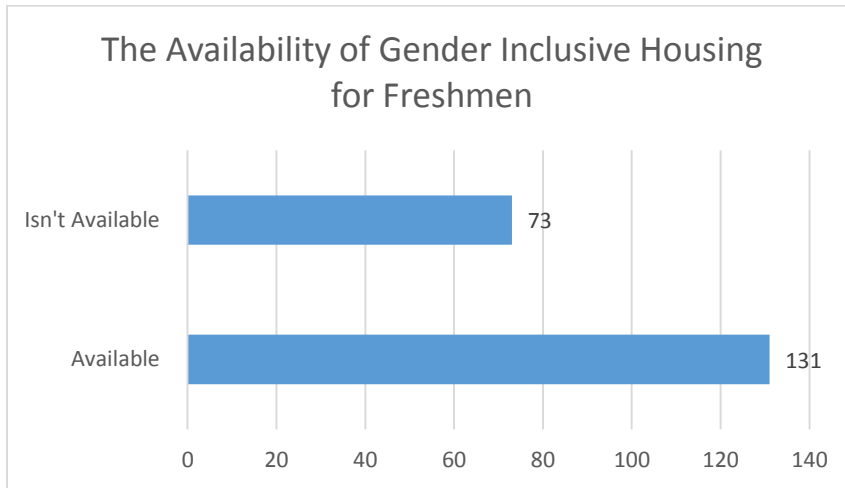


Figure 1

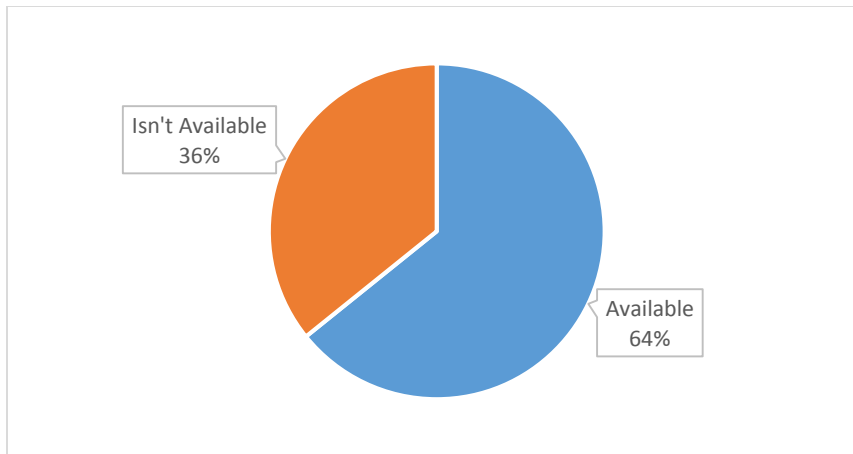


Figure 2

Traditional rooms have beds and desks with communal bathrooms/showers and a communal kitchen/living area (somewhere in the dorm building, may not even be in the wing or on the floor). Suite style rooms usually have bedroom(s) and a living area and possibly a kitchen and/or bathroom. Schools differ on this with their own definition of 'suite style'. The main issue between these two in regards to gender inclusive housing are the bathrooms. Which is safer: a gender neutral bathroom in the corridor or a private one that is shared with 1-3 people.

The analysis was to see what kind room setup these 131 schools have associated with gender inclusive housing: traditional rooms, suite style, or both. It turns out that it is about half way down in regards what style is used more with 53 schools have either style and 25 having both.

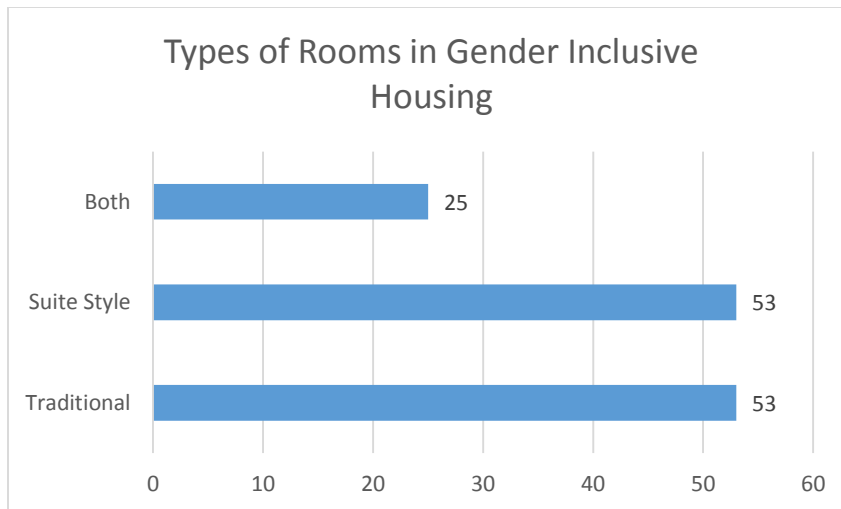


Figure 3

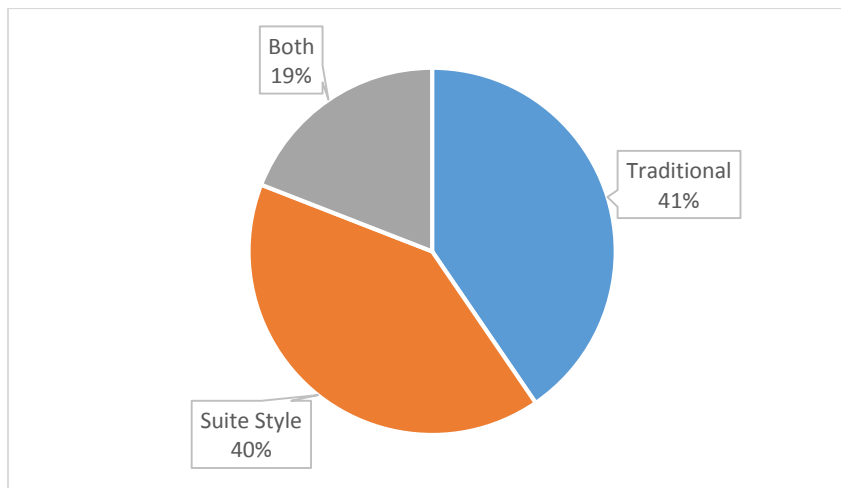


Figure 4

The University at Buffalo has gender inclusive housing for freshmen available within the Ellicott Complex on North Campus. In this community, a gender-inclusive bathroom is shared among all residents.

Two factors contribute to good nutrition – access to healthy food and nutritional information on options. In one study of nutrition among public university freshman, one in four students gained an average of fifteen pounds during their first semester, the famous “Freshmen 15”. Unsurprisingly, students that gained the most weight ate fewer fruits and vegetables, indulged in fattier foods and slept less than students that saw no change in their weight by winter break. This demonstrates the importance of having good dining facilities that are both accessible to students and offers nutritious food with nutritional information.

This is based on College Niche’s The 2017 Best College Food ranking, which “is based on meal plan costs and student reviews. Top-ranked colleges offer outstanding on-campus dining—students can easily access healthy, quality food across a wide range of cuisines and dietary preferences,” according to the site. The ranking consists of 100 colleges and universities.

The data show how many colleges and universities on this list have dining halls in the building or the residential area. It shows that about only 1/3 of these schools have dining halls in buildings or residential areas.

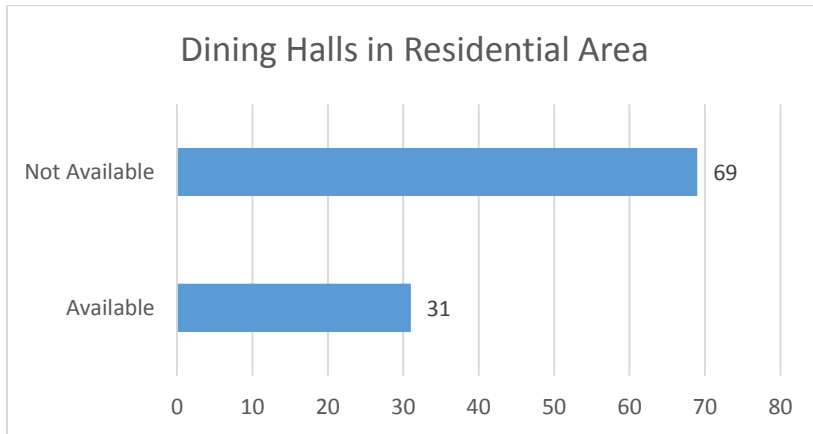


Figure 5

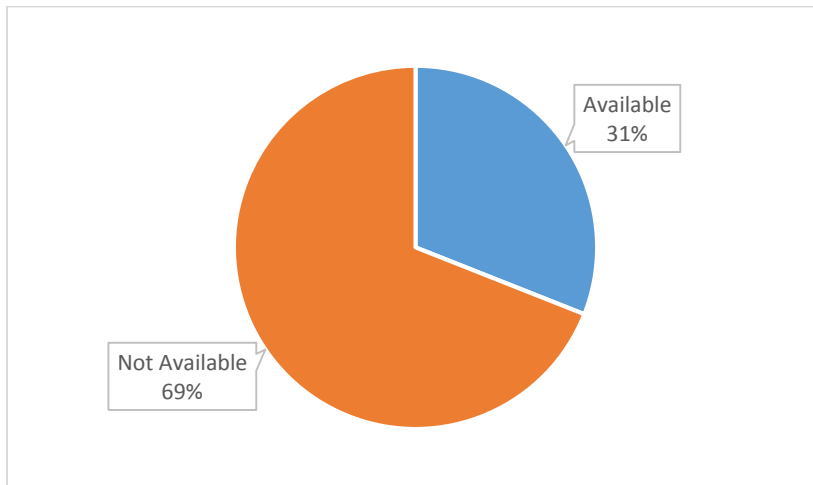


Figure 6

Information available online about food service in the 31 buildings with dining halls was reviewed as well. The majority had nutrition information available at 58%.

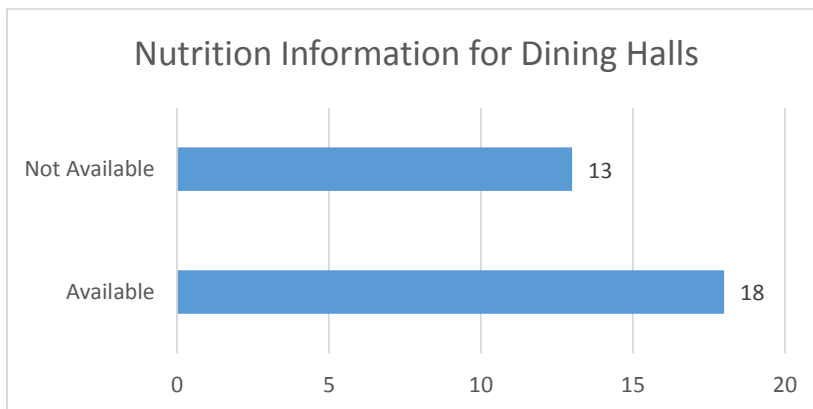


Figure 7

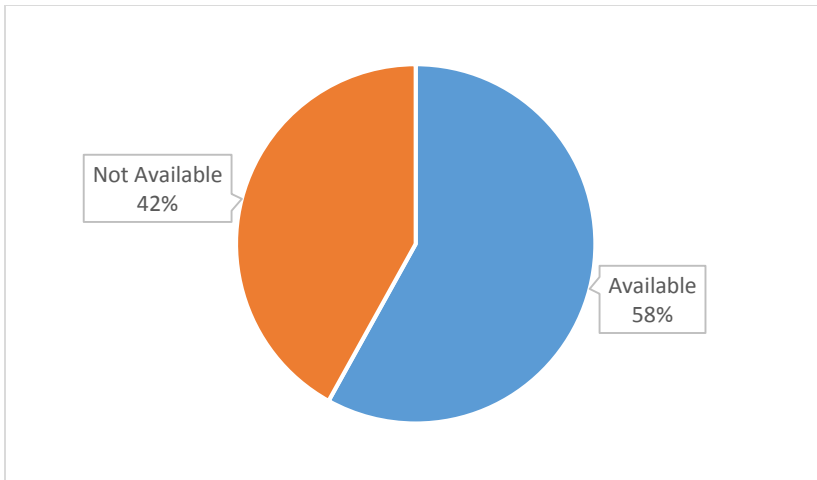


Figure 8

Another supportive feature for good nutrition is having kitchens or kitchenettes available for student use. A kitchen or kitchenette was available within at least one location within the residence halls especially in those that don't have a dining facility. A majority of these schools have them available at 81%.

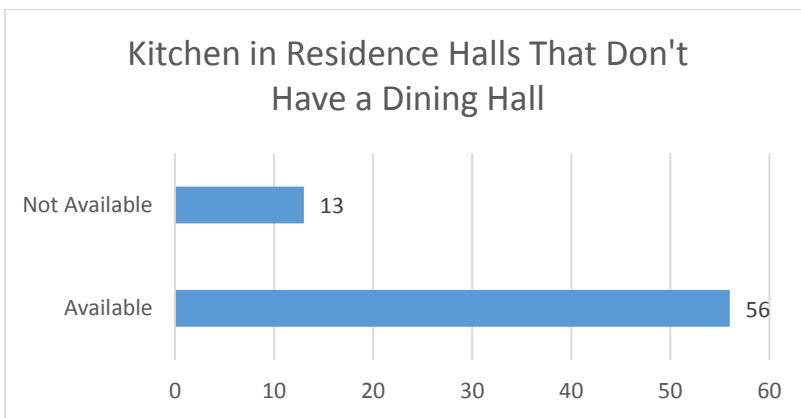


Figure 9

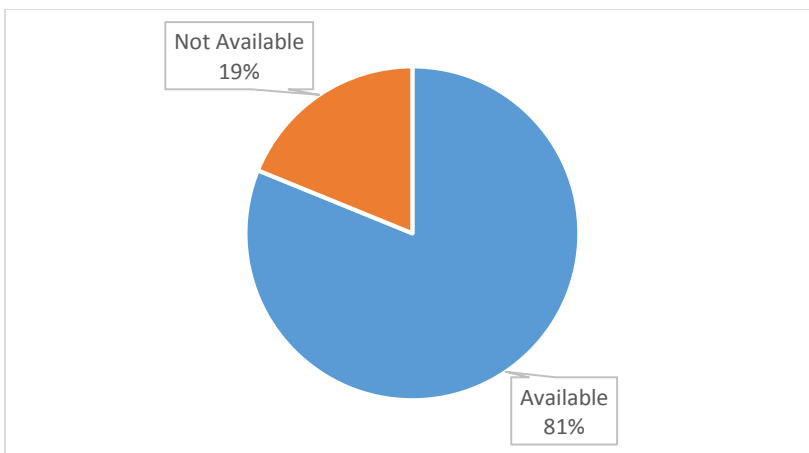


Figure 10

The end result of all this research shows that 13% of the schools don't have anything food related within their halls.

The University at Buffalo has dining facilities within each of their residential areas with the nutritional information available. Additionally, there are kitchenettes throughout each residential hall.

Living learning communities are residential housing programs that incorporate academically based themes and build community through common learning. These programs range from a handful of students living together because they share common academic interests to a four-year, degree-granting, residential "college-within-a-college". "Living learning communities with the strongest outcomes are most likely to do: have a strong student affair–academic affairs presence and partnership, identify clear learning objectives with strong academic focus throughout the program, and capitalize on community settings to create opportunities for learning wherever and whenever it occurs." (Brower, "Living-Learning Programs: One High-Impact Educational Practice We Now Know a Lot About")

The State University of New York is the largest comprehensive university system in the United States. The impact in New York State and across the globe begins with 64 institutions, including research universities, academic medical centers, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, colleges of technology and an online learning network. Approximately 460,000 students are educated in more than 7,500 degree and certificate programs, and nearly 2 million in workforce and professional development programs. Since the proposed project will be on a SUNY campus, living learning communities were studied in this area.

First, the number of schools with housing available was identified with 3/4 of the schools.

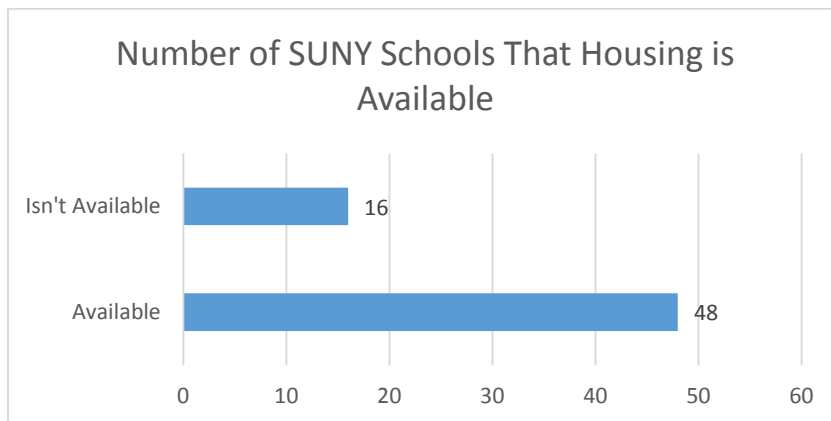


Figure 11

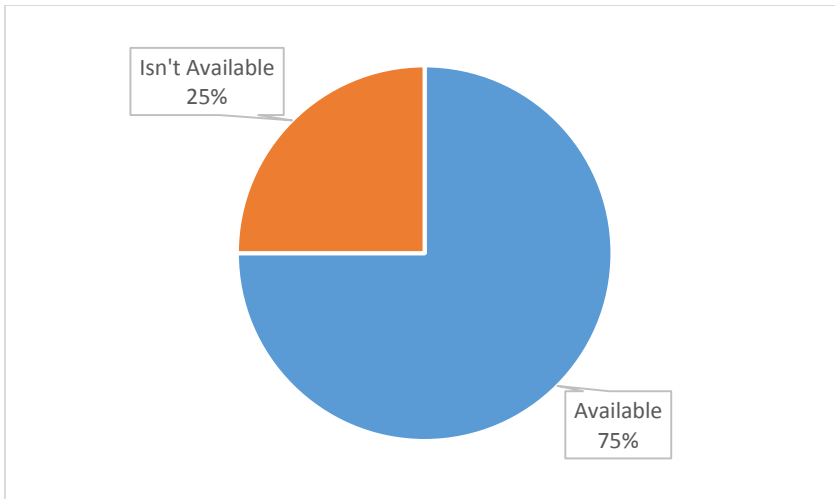


Figure 12

Then, among those, the presence of living-learning communities was searched. The results show that a majority of SUNY schools do not have living learning communities.

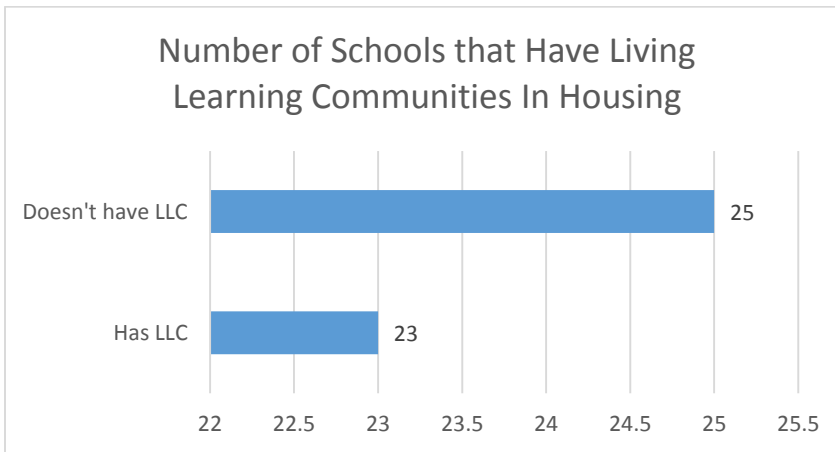


Figure 13

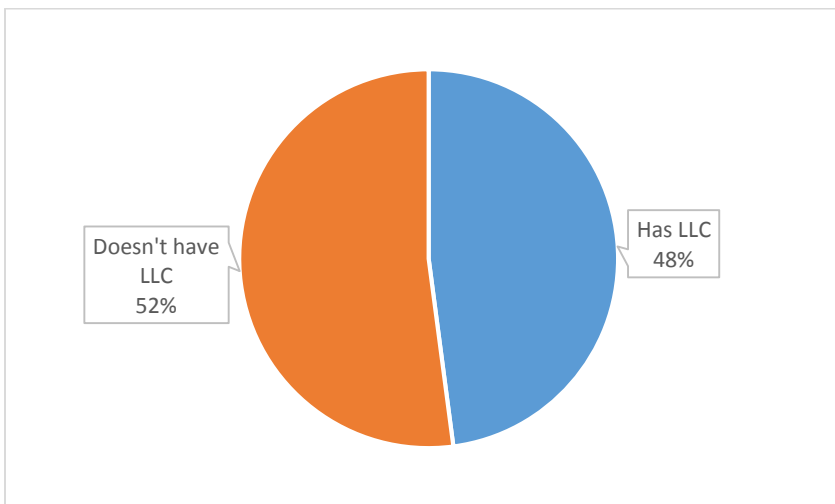


Figure 14

Living-learning communities in SUNY schools were studied to find out what types are offered. There are three separate categories: common major, common interest, and common program affiliation.

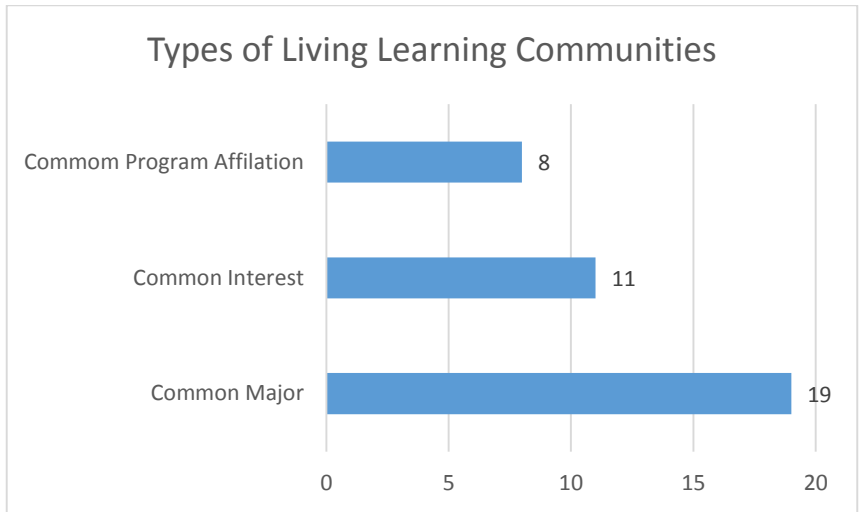


Figure 15

At the University at Buffalo, there are living learning communities for all three categories. There are First-Year Interest communities (FYI) for majors like architecture, engineering, health professions, management, pharmacy, and social sciences. There are also groups for The Academies, Acker Scholars, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Global 360 Community, Honors College, and Leadership House.

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