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College Housing 2005

Special Report

by Paul Abramson

- The majority of colleges and universities in the United States need more residence hall space than they currently have.
- They not only need more, they need better space with more emphasis on suites and apartments, on technology and on other amenities.
- The need for more and better facilities, the cost to students and budget cuts that affect maintenance and operations are considered the three major issues facing chief housing officers through the next five years. It is going to be difficult to meet the demands for upgrading while holding costs and dealing with budget cuts.
- Most chief housing officers feel that they have taken, or have underway, necessary steps to increase security.

These are among the major findings of *College Planning & Management's* third annual special report on college housing.

The statistics and findings are based on the results of an e-mail survey sent to 596 chief college housing

officers. Responses were received from 127 (21 percent). **Table 1** profiles the respondents, showing that 73 were from public institutions, 54 from private. The public colleges average almost 12,000 students, the private schools just over 3,000.

Table 1: Base Numbers

	Public	Private	All Institutions
Responses:	73	54	127
Total Students	857,004	166,547	1,023,551
Average Number of Students	11,906	3,084	8,123
Median Number of Students	6,950	1,550	3,500
Residence Hall Buildings	1,150	935	2,085
Total Number of On-Campus Beds	222,651	85,682	308,333
Total Additional College-Related Beds	30,075	5,361	35,436
Average Number of Beds Per Campus	3,050	1,587	2,368
Median Number of Beds Per Campus	1,937	1,110	1,550
Number of Beds per Residence Hall:			
Average	232	138	208
Median	194	112	151
Percentage of Students Accommodated:			
Average	41.1	73.0	54.8
Median	29.6	72.1	42.6

Residence Hall Construction in 2005

As part of an annual look at all college construction (see *College Planning & Management*, February 2005), 53 residence hall projects were identified. These were all projects that, at the time of identification, were actually underway with completion scheduled for 2005 or 2006.

Other than the fact that they were in process, their overall cost and projected size, little was known about what was being provided, for how many students and how dollars were being spent. In an effort to get more information, a follow-up survey was e-mailed to the colleges involved, seeking more detailed information. Information was obtained on 37 of the projects, almost 65 percent.

The residence halls were located in 21 different states and ranged in size from just 86 beds to 1,001. They ranged in total cost from a low of \$3 million at a small western private college to more than \$60 million at three large public universities. One institution provided just 175 sq. ft. for each student; on the other end, several reported that their residence halls provided more than 450 sq. ft. for each student.

Those ranges, of course, were dependent to some extent on what other than student rooms were located within the structure. Beyond resident rooms, the residence hall with just 175 sq. ft. per student provided only a laundry and vending area. One that provided 440 sq. ft. for each student included a kitchen, dining hall, fitness center, study hall and a computer room, in addition to resident rooms. Some others included classrooms and faculty offices within the structure.

In other words, what constitutes a residence hall on one campus may be very different from what will be found on another. The one thing they all have in common is that they provide living space for students.

What's Underway Now

Nevertheless, there are enough similarities, especially in purpose, to make comparisons interesting. In the tables below, 37 residence hall projects now underway are looked at in terms of cost, size, use, and facilities and amenities provided.

As **Table 1** shows, the median residence hall currently under construction is expected to cost \$19,900,000. Of that, almost 86 percent is going to the actual construction of the building. Loose furniture and furnishings account for about 4.4 percent of total cost with the balance going to various fees and site preparation. (The dollar figures shown are each medians for that category and do not add to the total shown.)

The median project now underway will provide 126,000 sq. ft. of space and will house 447 students. The median among the projects will provide 346 sq. ft. per student. The median cost per student is \$52,638 and the median cost per sq. ft. is \$155.57. The median spending for furniture and furnishings is \$2,171 per student.

Table 2 looks at the facilities being provided. Virtually every residence hall underway now is for coeducational use. The single exception reported was a residence for women only at a coeducational institution.

All projects will have a laundry and study rooms. TV rooms will be in close to 90 percent. Three of four residences will include a kitchen and almost half will have a computer center. One of five will include classrooms, and a fitness center of some sort will be in 16 percent of the buildings. Dining halls will be available in just one of 20.

Security is a major concern on all campuses. Card access to the buildings will be installed in more than 78 percent but card access to individual rooms will be in just one of 10. Forty-three percent of the buildings will have video surveillance.

Rooms will be air conditioned in almost 95 percent of the residences reported, and rooms will be carpeted in two out of three. Virtually every building will provide vending machines and one of five will install an ATM.

How do your new, planned and existing residence halls match up with the ones that are under construction today?

Table 1
Cost and Size of Residence Halls

(Results from a survey of 37 residence halls currently underway)

All figures shown are medians

Total Cost	\$19,900,000
Construction Cost	\$16,000,000
Furniture and Furnishings	\$900,500
Fees	\$1,729,923
Size of Project (square feet)	126,000
Number of Students	447
Square Feet per Student	346
Cost per Student	\$52,638
Cost of Furnishings per Student	\$2,171
Cost per Square Foot	\$155.57

Table 2
What's in a New Residence Hall?

(Percent of respondents including facility/amenity)

Laundry	100.0%
Vending	97.3%
Rooms Air Conditioned	94.6%
Study Room	89.2%
TV Room	86.5%
Card Access to Building	78.4%
Kitchen	75.7%
Rooms Carpeted	67.6%
Computer Center	48.5%
Video Surveillance	43.2%
Classrooms	32.4%
ATM	21.6%
Fitness Center	16.2%
Card Access to Rooms	10.8%
Dining Hall	5.4%

Throughout this study, we show averages and medians. The medians are used to mitigate the influence of unusual situations, such as a single huge university that might bring the average number of students up. Thus, as shown, although the average number of students on public campuses was almost 12,000, the median among the 73 respondents was just under 7,000.

The 127 campuses represented in the study contained 2,085 residence halls and 308,000 beds. In addition, there were 35,436 beds available to students in college-related housing, including fraternities and sororities.

Among public colleges, the average institution had just over 3,000 beds and the median just under 2,000. The average private college responding to this survey provided 1,587 beds and the median just over 1,100.

The public colleges were not only larger, their residence halls were larger. The average residence hall on a public college campus houses 232 students; the median 194. At private colleges, the average residence hall size is 138 students and the median, 112.

Public colleges accommodate a much smaller percentage of their student bodies than do private colleges. The average public college provides housing for 41.1 percent of its students; the median provides housing for less than 30 percent. Private colleges indicated that they have housing for better than 70 percent of their students.

More Space Planned

Table 2 looks at current construction needs and plans of the respondents. It is interesting to note that this year more than half of the reporting institutions (53.6 percent) said that they do not have enough residence hall space. In previous years, less than half indicated that more space was needed. In other words, demand is growing more quickly than new space is coming on line.

Slightly more than one-third of the colleges reporting have residence hall construction underway now, and almost as many expect to get started within the next five years. Just over 30 percent indicate that

there are no plans for construction despite the apparent need.

Public colleges plan to build their new residence halls for 300 students; private colleges are looking at

Table 2: Construction Planned and Underway

	Public	Private	All Institutions
Q: How much residence hall space does your campus currently have?			
	Percentage of Respondents		
Sufficient	41.2	44.4	42.3
Too much	4.4	3.7	4.1
Too Little	54.4	51.9	53.6
Q: Is your college planning to increase its stock of residence hall beds?			
Yes, underway now	42.6	29.6	36.6
Yes, within five years	26.5	38.9	32.5
No, no plans	30.9	31.5	30.9
Q: If you do have plans to add more beds, how many would be added?			
Median Number of Beds Planned	300	150	200
Percentage in Traditional Rooms	12.3	22.1	14.4
Percentage in Suites	44.1	28.7	40.8
Percentage in Apartments/Efficiencies	43.6	49.2	44.8

Table 3: New Residence Halls

	Public	Private	All Institutions
The Primary Funding Method is:			
	Percentage of Respondents		
Revenue Bonds	58.9	43.3	52.4
Bank Loans	3.9	16.2	9.1
State Appropriations	1.9	0.0	1.1
Operating Funds	3.9	13.5	7.9
Reserve Funds	7.8	5.4	6.8
Donor	1.9	10.8	5.7
Private Developer	13.9	2.7	9.1
Other	7.8	8.1	7.9
They Will be Owned by:			
The College/University	77.1	91.9	82.8
An Institutional Foundation	2.1	0.0	2.2
A Private Foundation	4.2	0.0	2.2
A Private Developer	12.4	5.4	8.6
Other	4.2	2.7	4.2
They Will be Managed by:			
The College/University	84.6	97.5	90.2
An Institutional Foundation	0.0	0.0	0.0
A Private Foundation	0.0	0.0	0.0
A Private Developer	3.8	0.0	2.2
A Private Property Manager	11.5	0.0	6.5
Other	0.0	2.5	1.1

residence halls for about 150. In terms of the type of space to be provided, about 15 percent of the beds will be in what was defined as traditional rooms, 41 percent will be in suites and 45 percent in efficiency apartments.

When a new residence hall is planned, the primary means to fund it is through the use of revenue bonds, with more than half the respondents indicating that as their primary funding method (see **Table 3**). More public colleges rely on bonds (58.9 percent) than do private ones (43.3 percent).

If not using revenue bonds, public colleges tend to turn to private developers for funding (13.9 percent). Few private colleges use this source of funding. Instead, those who do not use revenue bonds turn to bank loans (16.2 percent), operating funds (13.5 percent) or to donors (10.8 percent).

No matter how they fund them, most institutions plan to own and manage their own residence halls. A little better than one of 10 public colleges expect pri-

vate developers to fund, own and manage their new residences. Private institutions have little interest in having private developers own their residence halls and none in allowing outsiders to manage them.

When residence halls are to be built (or remodeled), do students participate in the planning? **Table 4** indicates that only 13 percent of all institutions have no mechanism for student input in the development and remodeling of residence halls. When student opinions are solicited, better than 90 percent of the colleges indicate that students are asked about building amenities and room amenities, and 81 percent ask students about type of furniture. Seven out of 10 ask students about recreation facilities, and two out of three involve students in questions concerning personal amenities. Technology infrastructure, communication systems and security are also areas in which student input is solicited, although in these cases by fewer than half of the participating colleges.

Most colleges (97.3 percent, see sidebar on current construction) install vending machines in their residence halls. We wondered what would be vended, a question that might well be put to students. Beverages are the mainstay, and snacks follow closely behind. Convenience products are available in 17.3 percent and condoms in 13.3 percent of the residences. In both instances, they are more likely to be available in public institutions. Sandwiches, salads and meals are in one of six public college residences but in less than four percent of private colleges.

Automated teller machines seem to be turning up in every stationery store and gas station. How about residence halls? About one in five residence halls include ATMs. The majority of colleges (64.7 percent) make them available, but in other buildings, such as student unions. Some 15.6 percent of respondents said they are not on campus at all.

Repairing the Damage

Residence halls take a great deal of abuse. It is a challenge to any chief housing officer to keep them in good condition. Most colleges (54.6 percent) have a regular schedule for upgrading their facilities (see **Table 5**), but it would appear the best intentions do

Table 4: Do Students Participate in Planning Decisions?

	Public	Private	All Institutions
Q: What input do you solicit from students when planning a new residence hall or remodeling an existing one?			
	Percentage of Respondents		
No Mechanism for Student Input	7.4	20.1	13.1
Student opinions are solicited concerning:			
Building amenities	93.5	97.7	95.2
Room amenities	96.8	95.3	96.2
Personal amenities	69.4	65.1	67.6
Type of furniture	80.6	81.4	81.0
Security systems	35.5	30.2	33.3
Technology infrastructure	43.5	39.5	43.9
Communication systems	38.7	27.9	34.3
Recreation	67.7	76.7	71.4
Q: Is vending used in residence halls to provide:			
Hot or cold beverages	95.5	80.8	82.6
Snacks	86.4	78.8	77.1
Sandwiches, salads, meals	16.7	3.8	10.2
Convenience products	21.2	15.4	17.3
Condoms	18.2	9.6	13.3
Q: Are ATM machines available in residence halls?			
Yes	19.1	14.8	19.7
No, only available off-campus	10.3	22.2	15.6
No, but available in other campus buildings	70.6	63.0	64.7

not always result in action. Twenty percent of the colleges responding said that they have a schedule for upgrades and follow it, but another 34 percent said they have the schedule but it is not followed. Better than 45 percent say that upgrades are made only on an as-needed basis.

Among institutions that have a regular schedule, a 10-year cycle seems to predominate. Beds, loose furniture, lounge furniture and kitchen equipment are all cycled on a 10-year basis. Laundry equipment is changed every five years, carpeting every seven. Residence halls are painted, in most instances, about every three years.

Whatever the schedule may be, colleges are right now considering or involved in projects for their existing residence halls. As **Table 5** shows, three-quarters of all colleges are currently planning or actually undertaking the replacement of furniture and furnishings, and 71.5 percent are involved in painting. Obviously, furniture replacement and painting are almost constant problems for the great majority of institutions.

Replacement of carpeting (65 percent) and adding or upgrading keying or card systems (56 percent) are other projects in which more than half the campuses are involved. Other projects in which a large number of colleges are involved include upgrading security systems (48 percent), adding lighting (45 percent) and upgrading fire and safety systems (41.5 percent). Improvements to residence hall HVAC systems, adding sprinkler systems and electrical upgrades are other projects being undertaken at more than a third of the colleges.

Remodeling rooms to create suites is being undertaken by almost 18 percent of the colleges. A number of respondents indicated that they were actually cutting down on the number of residents they could accommodate in order to change traditional residence halls into suites.

Security Systems

Security is a major concern on any college campus and is of particular concern to residence halls. In answer to the question, "Are you planning to

upgrade security systems in your residence halls?" almost 12 percent of respondents said that they have already completed their security systems (see **Table 6**), and another 30 percent said that they are in the process of doing so. One-third of respondents said that they would be doing so through the next three to five years, but one-quarter of all chief housing officers said that their colleges have no plans to upgrade security in residence halls at the present time.

When asked what they were doing to upgrade residence hall security, 70 percent said they were installing keycard systems. A much smaller number (26 percent) are providing them for rooms.

More than half are installing security cameras around residence halls, and 39 percent are installing them inside. Interestingly, while public and private colleges are both using external cameras, there is a

Table 5: How Often Are Residence Halls Upgraded?

	Public	Private	All Institutions
Q: Does your college have a regular schedule for upgrades?			
	Percentage of Respondents		
Yes, we have a schedule	59.7	48.1	54.6
We adhere to the schedule	19.4	22.2	20.7
Have schedule but do not stick to it	40.3	25.9	33.9
No, upgrades on an as-needed basis	40.3	51.9	45.4
Q: If there is a policy, how often are the following scheduled to take place?			
	Median Years		
Replacement of Beds	10	10	10
Replacement of Loose Furniture	10	10	10
Replacement of Lounge Furniture	10	10	10
Replacement of Kitchen Equipment	10	10	10
Replacement of Laundry Equipment	5	5	5
Replacement of Carpeting	7	7	7
Residence Halls Painted	4	3	3
Q: What major projects are you considering right now for existing residence halls?			
	Percentage of Respondents		
Replacement of furniture and furnishings	81.2	70.4	76.4
Painting	71.0	72.2	71.5
Replacement of carpeting/flooring	65.2	64.8	65.0
Adding/upgrading keying or card system	49.3	64.8	56.1
Upgrading security systems (surveillance, security lighting, alarms)	56.5	37.0	48.0
Upgrading lighting	47.8	40.7	44.7
Upgrading fire safety systems	42.0	40.7	41.5
Upgrading HVAC	44.9	33.3	39.8
Adding sprinkler systems	40.6	33.3	37.4
Major electrical upgrades	36.2	35.2	35.8
Remodeling rooms to create suites	24.6	9.3	17.9
Other	11.6	11.1	11.4

Table 6: Security Systems

Q: Are you planning to upgrade security systems in residence halls?	All		
	Public	Private	Institutions
Respondents	Percentage of		
Have completed security systems	10.4	13.5	11.8
Yes, in process now	37.3	21.2	30.3
Yes, over next three to five years	31.4	36.5	33.6
No plans at this time	20.9	28.8	24.3

Q: What steps are you taking to upgrade residence hall security systems?	All		
	Public	Private	Institutions
Percentage of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents		
Installing keycard system for buildings	67.4	74.2	70.1
Installing outside security cameras	54.3	48.4	51.9
Installing security cameras in residence halls	52.2	19.4	39.0
Increased lighting in area	43.5	32.2	39.0
Installing keycard system for rooms	23.9	29.0	26.0
More security patrols	30.4	16.1	24.7
Installing emergency communication kiosks, call boxes	13.0	25.8	18.2
Adding security/reception posts at entrance	19.6	12.9	16.9
Other	8.7	6.5	7.8
Installing panic buttons in individual suites	0.0	0.0	0.0

great divide when it comes to internal surveillance, with more than half the public institutions doing that while less than 20 percent of the private colleges will take that step. It is not clear whether that is because of greater concern about not intruding on student life or because of the expense.

Increased lighting in the area is being undertaken by 39 percent of the colleges, and 18 percent are installing emergency calling kiosks. In this case, private colleges are almost twice as likely as public ones to use these devices.

The idea of personal panic buttons in individual rooms has no takers at the present time.

Major Issues

Two years ago, when *College Planning & Management* first asked chief housing officers what major issues they expected to be facing during the following five years, upgrading existing space, budget cuts affecting maintenance and operations, and security ranked one, two and three, followed by the cost to students.

A year later, upgrading existing space still ranked as the number-one problem, followed by concerns about costs to students and budgets affecting maintenance and operations. Security had fallen into fifth place behind staffing. This year, asked the same question and given essentially the same choices (see **Table 7**), chief housing officers ranked cost to students as their major issue through the next three to five years (47.2 percent), followed by upgrading existing space (43.1 percent) and budget cuts affecting maintenance and operations (32.5 percent). Security is now a major issue for fewer than 20 percent of the colleges. It would appear that most people responsible for running residence halls feel the steps they have taken and are taking to upgrade security have defused that issue for the present time.

Ranked fourth this year was changing student expectations (32 percent), followed by the need to add and upgrade technology (25 percent), concerns about drug and alcohol use (24 percent), and staffing (24 percent).

Public and private institutions have similar concerns, though budget cuts and the need to add and

Table 7: What Major Problems Are Expected in the Next Five Years?

Q: What do you see are the major issues facing you through the next three to five years?	All		
	Public	Private	Institutions
Percentage of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents		
Cost to students	50.7	42.6	47.2
Upgrading existing space	33.3	55.6	43.1
Budget cuts affecting maintenance and operations	39.1	24.1	32.5
Changing student expectations	33.3	29.6	31.7
Adding/upgrading technology	30.4	18.5	25.2
Drug/alcohol use	15.9	35.2	24.4
Staffing	23.2	24.1	23.6
Keeping beds filled	18.8	18.5	18.7
Security and fire safety	17.4	20.4	18.7
Parent interference	13.0	18.5	15.4
Lack of space	5.8	22.2	13.0
Providing additional amenities	10.1	14.8	12.2
Competition from private residence halls	14.5	5.6	10.6
Vandalism	7.2	3.7	5.7
Other	5.8	3.7	4.9
Smoking	1.4	0.0	0.8

upgrade technology ranked significantly higher for public institutions, and drug and alcohol use and upgrading student space get more attention among private ones.

We were intrigued by the fact that parent interference has become a major issue on 15 percent of the campuses, pushing ahead of such traditional concerns as competition from private residences (10.6 percent), vandalism (5.7 percent) and smoking (0.8 percent).

Building Your Ideal Residence

Suppose you were free to start from scratch and, based on your experience, could design the ideal residence hall. How big would it be, what kind of accommodations would be provided, how would you deal with security, how would you deal with telephones? These are among the areas we asked chief housing officers to consider. The results are shown in **Table 8**.

Across the board, the preferred size of a residence hall seems to be 101 to 250 students. Persons in public colleges tend to go for larger halls, those in private colleges tend to go for smaller ones.

Better than 90 percent of respondents said that they would provide coed residence halls with a mix of traditional rooms, suites and apartments. It is interesting to know that we asked the same questions two years ago, and there was little or no change in these areas. But in terms of carpeting, the percentage of respondents who would provide it in all rooms has dropped, and the percentage that would provide carpet in no rooms at all has increased significantly.

In terms of air conditioning, there was no basic change except that a larger number two years ago would have had central air conditioning with individual room control. This year, more respondents would make it a central system with central control. One would

presume that the increasing costs of fuel are leading some housing officers to think that they would like to control how heating and air conditioning is used, rather than leaving it to individual students.

Two years ago, 55 percent of the respondents

Table 8: Design the Ideal Residence Hall

	Public	Private	All Institutions
Q: How many students would you accommodate?			
Percentage of Respondents			
Fewer than 50	1.4	7.4	4.1
51-100	14.6	35.2	23.6
101-250	43.5	44.4	43.9
251-500	33.3	11.1	23.6
More than 500	7.2	1.9	4.8
Q: Would it be co-ed?			
Yes	92.8	90.7	91.9
No	7.2	9.3	8.1
Q: What type of accommodations would you provide?			
Traditional rooms	21.4	32.3	25.5
Suites	39.7	42.7	41.8
Apartments	36.7	22.5	30.0
Other	2.2	2.5	2.7
Q: How would you deal with carpeting?			
Provide in all rooms	54.5	48.1	51.7
Provide in no rooms	45.2	51.9	46.7
Student's choice	0.3	0.0	1.6
Q: How would you deal with air conditioning?			
Central, individual room control	75.4	73.6	73.9
Central, system control	16.9	18.9	17.6
Individual room units provided by college	4.6	7.5	5.9
Individual room units provided for rent	3.1	0.0	1.6
Q: How would you deal with telephones?			
College provides	34.3	53.7	43.0
Student provides (cell)	65.7	46.3	57.0
Q: How would you deal with security/surveillance?			
Cameras throughout	53.1	42.3	48.3
Cameras, exterior only	34.4	38.5	36.2
No cameras	12.5	19.2	15.5
Q: How would you deal with security/access control?			
Key card system	88	92.5	90.1
Room keys	7.5	1.9	5.0
Room codes	0.0	1.9	0.8
Other	4.5	3.7	4.1
Q: How would you deal with technology?			
One port per room	0.0	1.9	0.8
One port per students	43.3	27.8	38.0
Wireless connections	53.7	70.3	61.2

said that the college should provide telephones. The pervasiveness of the cell phone has turned those numbers around, with almost 60 percent of the respondents opting to have students provide their own cell phones.

In another change from two years ago, a considerably larger proportion of respondents would have security and surveillance cameras throughout their buildings rather than only on the exterior. Nine out of 10 respondents now desire keycard systems — a 10-percent increase in two years. And finally, whereas

two years ago the question was what kind of computer hookup would be provided (almost everyone said “high-speed”), now a majority of respondents think that wireless connections is the proper way to go.

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