



A Case for Campus Housing: What Makes a Campus Home?

Benchworks Research Note
August 2024

Introduction

Campus housing is more than just a place to live; it plays a pivotal role in shaping the college experience. It transforms a university from a place of study into a vibrant community where students truly feel at home. Living on campus allows students to immerse themselves in campus life, build lasting connections, engage in activities, and develop a sense of belonging. This residential experience creates a “home away from home,” offering an environment where students can thrive academically, personally, and socially.

ACUHO-I's [Future of the Profession](#) project focused on redefining the role of campus housing in higher education. This initiative is about anticipating changes, addressing challenges, and exploring opportunities that will shape the next generation of campus housing professionals. As we consider what the future might hold, it's essential to reflect on what we already know: campus housing is a powerful force in student success. But what does current data from students tell us about the role housing plays in creating these impactful experiences?

To explore this question, Benchworks and ACUHO-I teamed up to create [this video](#) that highlights key data showing what makes campus feel like home for students. This research note builds on the insights shared in the video, featuring data from the 2022-2023 ACUHO-I Benchworks Resident Assessment. The 2022-2023 Resident Assessment, completed by over 130,000 students from 168 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, provides additional details and data points to further demonstrate the value of on-campus housing and its impact on student life.



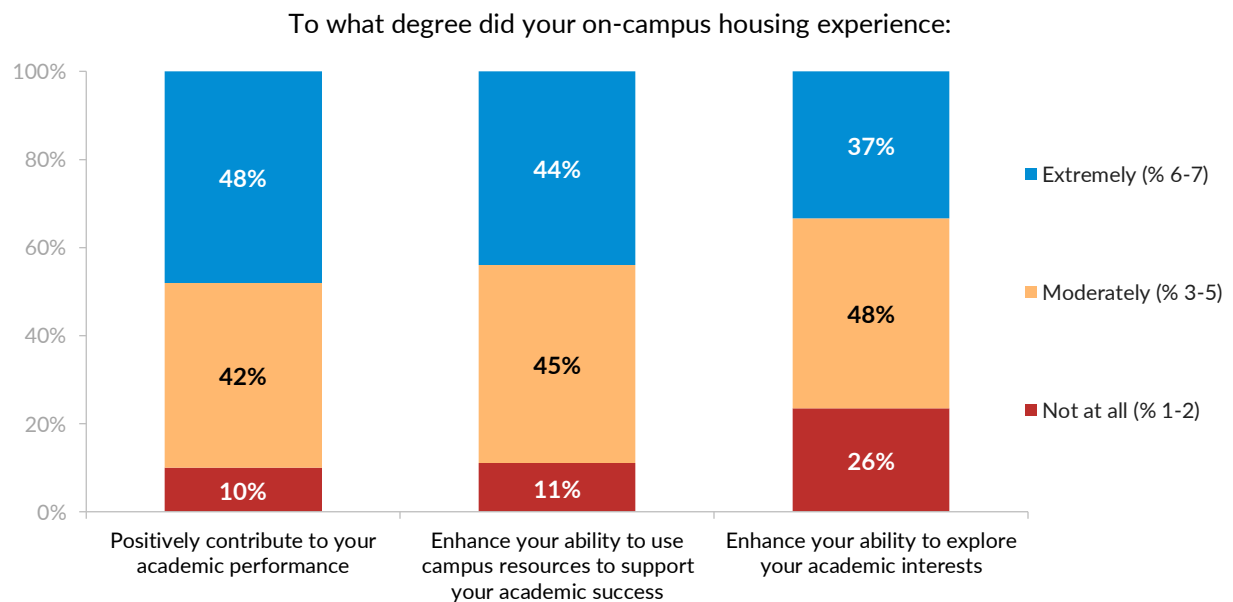
Home is Thriving

On-campus living is a key factor to enhancing student success and persistence. It positively impacts academic performance, improves retention rates, and increases the likelihood of degree completion.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of students who report that living on campus positively impacts various aspects of their academic life. Students indicate that on-campus living contributes to their academic performance, improves their access to campus resources, and enhances their ability to explore academic interests

By providing a "home away from home," on-campus living helps students thrive academically, personally, and socially, ultimately contributing to their overall success and enhancing their potential to complete their educational journey.

FIGURE 1.
How Living on Campus Supports Academic Success



For further thought: It is important to consider the long-term implications of academic success facilitated by on-campus living. [Research has shown](#) that students who perform well academically are more likely to secure better job opportunities and earn higher salaries after graduation. This data underscores the interconnected nature of on-campus living, academic achievement, and future career prospects.



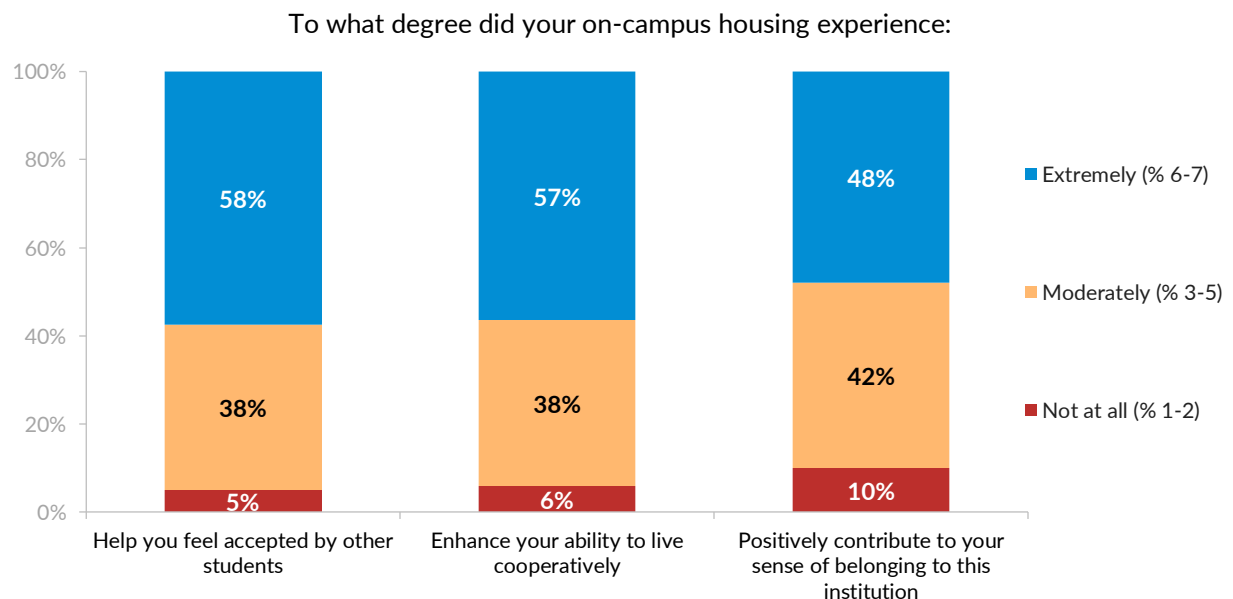
Home is Belonging

A student's sense of belonging is fundamental to the college experience. Sense of belonging refers to how accepted, valued, and supported students feel within and by their campus communities.

Figure 2 demonstrates the ways in which campus living forges connections. When students see themselves as integral members of an inclusive environment, they typically show improved academic performance, build stronger social networks, and experience better overall well-being

The survey results indicate that feeling connected to their campus community may positively influence students' engagement with both their academic pursuits and social interactions. These findings highlight the importance of fostering a sense of belonging in campus housing.

FIGURE 2.
How Living on Campus Supports Belonging



For further thought: As we consider the importance of sense of belonging on college student success, it is necessary to engage in further reflection and exploration. For example, in what ways might current campus policies and or practices hinder a student's sense of belonging? How can we effectively measure student sense of belonging on campus? Are there ways beyond surveys? Lastly, how do we balance institutional responsibility with student initiative in creating a sense of belonging? Do we want college-ready students or student-ready colleges?

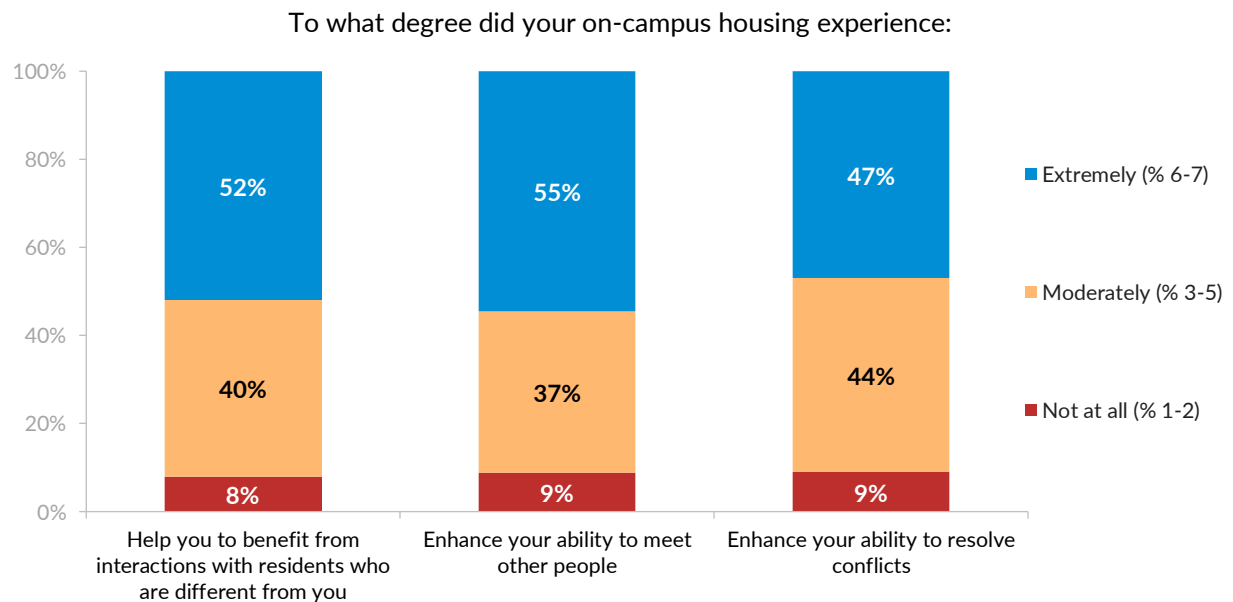


Home is Illuminating

Living on campus can often be a transformative experience for students. The unique environment of campus housing broadens perspectives, deepens world understanding, and fosters meaningful personal development. By immersing students in a diverse community, on-campus living creates countless opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.

Figure 3 illustrates how on-campus housing experiences contribute to students' personal growth in key areas. A majority of students found their housing experience extremely beneficial in enhancing their ability to meet new people and interact with diverse residents. A sizable portion also reported that living on campus improved their conflict resolution skills.

FIGURE 3.
How Living on Campus Broadens Perspectives



For further thought: While the data underscores the myriad benefits of on-campus housing, it also prompts questions about broader implications and future directions. How can institutions ensure equitable access to on-campus housing, particularly for students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds? In an increasingly digital world, how can technology be leveraged to enhance the on-campus living experience without compromising essential face-to-face interactions? To what extent does the physical design of residence halls impact student engagement, and how can innovative architectural solutions promote collaboration and social interaction while respecting individual privacy needs?

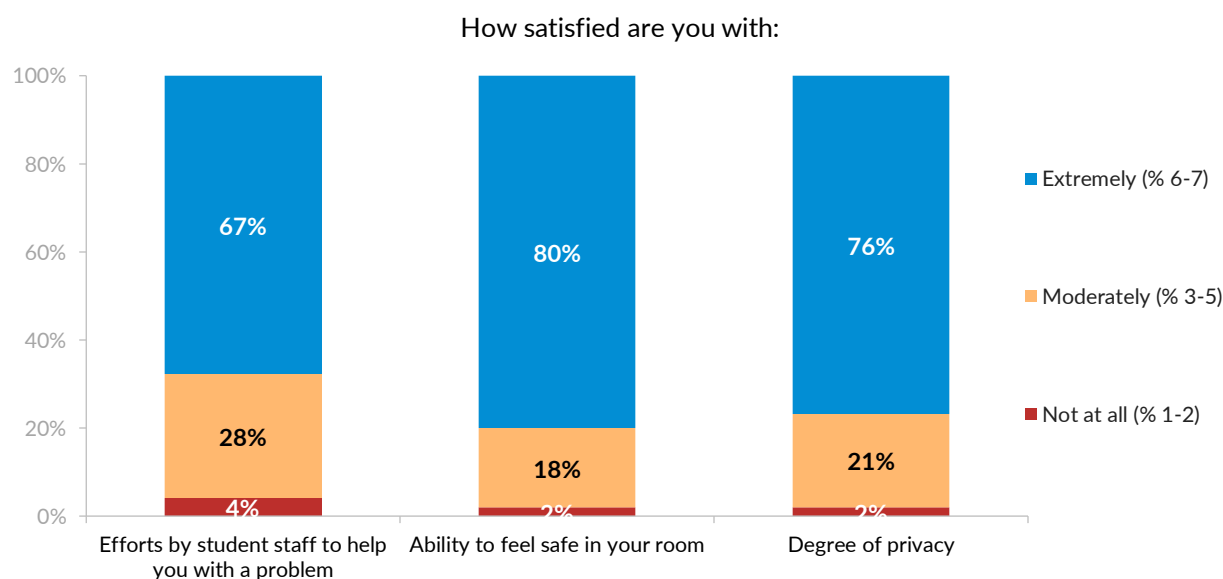


Home is Supporting

Campus living fosters a nurturing environment in which students feel valued and supported. Residence halls that offer a welcoming atmosphere, safety, and privacy create an environment conducive to student success and comfort. Dedicated student staff members play a large role in this supportive ecosystem by assisting their peers with various concerns and needs. In fact, nearly seventy percent of students interact with student staff at least once per week.

Figure 4 illustrates students' satisfaction levels with key aspects of their on-campus living experience, reflecting the caring environment fostered within residence halls.

FIGURE 4.
How Living on Campus Makes Students Feel Cared For



For further thought: To explore how campus living creates a caring environment, consider the following questions: How can institutions balance assistance and student autonomy? How can student staff training be enhanced to better equip staff in addressing various resident concerns? What aspects of residence hall life contribute to students feeling safe in their rooms? What strategies can residential programs implement to support student mental health and well-being? Examining these questions can help institutions enhance their residential programs, creating a nurturing living experience through effective staff and support systems.



Conclusion

Living on campus plays a substantial role in student success, fostering academic achievement and a sense of belonging. Data shows that on-campus living positively impacts students' academic performance, access to resources, and exploration of interests. It also creates a supportive environment where students feel cared for and safe, while broadening their perspectives through diverse interactions with peers. These findings make a compelling case for investing in quality campus housing. By providing a "home away from home," on-campus living not only supports immediate academic success but also contributes to students' overall growth and preparation for future challenges, potentially influencing their career prospects and life skills.

For further thought:

1. How can campus housing programs evolve to better prepare students for the changing nature of work and life after college, particularly in terms of developing essential soft skills and adaptability?
2. Considering the changing student demographics and needs, how might campus housing models adapt to better support non-traditional students, including adult learners and students with families?
3. How can on-campus living programs adapt to address emerging challenges in student mental health and well-being?
4. As sustainability becomes increasingly important, what strategies can be implemented in campus housing to promote environmental consciousness and reduce the ecological footprint of residential facilities?

These questions prompt us to think critically about the future of campus housing, ensuring it continues to meet the diverse needs of students while preparing them for a dynamic and evolving world.



Methods

Survey

The ACUHO-I/Benchworks Resident Assessment enables institutions to evaluate the experiences of on-campus residents. The survey focuses on satisfaction with the housing experience, facilities, staff, dining, and roommates; as well as the degree to which students indicate their housing experience contributed to learning related to community interactions, programs, diverse interactions, academic initiatives, sustainability, and practical competencies. Results are mapped to both the ACUHO-I Standards and Ethical Principles for College and University Housing Professionals and the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) student learning and development outcomes.

Dataset

The findings in this research note are based on aggregate analysis from the 2022-2023 academic year administration of the ACUHO-I/Benchworks Resident Assessment. In total, 134,442 students from 168 institutions in the United States and Canada completed the assessment. Institutions could choose whether to administer online or via paper; 155 institutions administered online using the Benchworks survey system and 12 administered via paper surveys. The average online response rate was 30%.

Analysis

The insights shared in this research note were developed based on a wide range of statistical analyses, including descriptive analysis (frequencies, means, standard deviations), correlational analysis and cross-tabulations with chi-square analysis, and regression models. The findings in this report are presented as descriptive analysis (percentages). Results do not indicate whether differences between groups are statistically significant. All figures reflect the number of responses to a single question and do not include missing data. Since percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, some totals may not equal 100.



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