Living Environments and Student Engagement: Implications for Research and Practice

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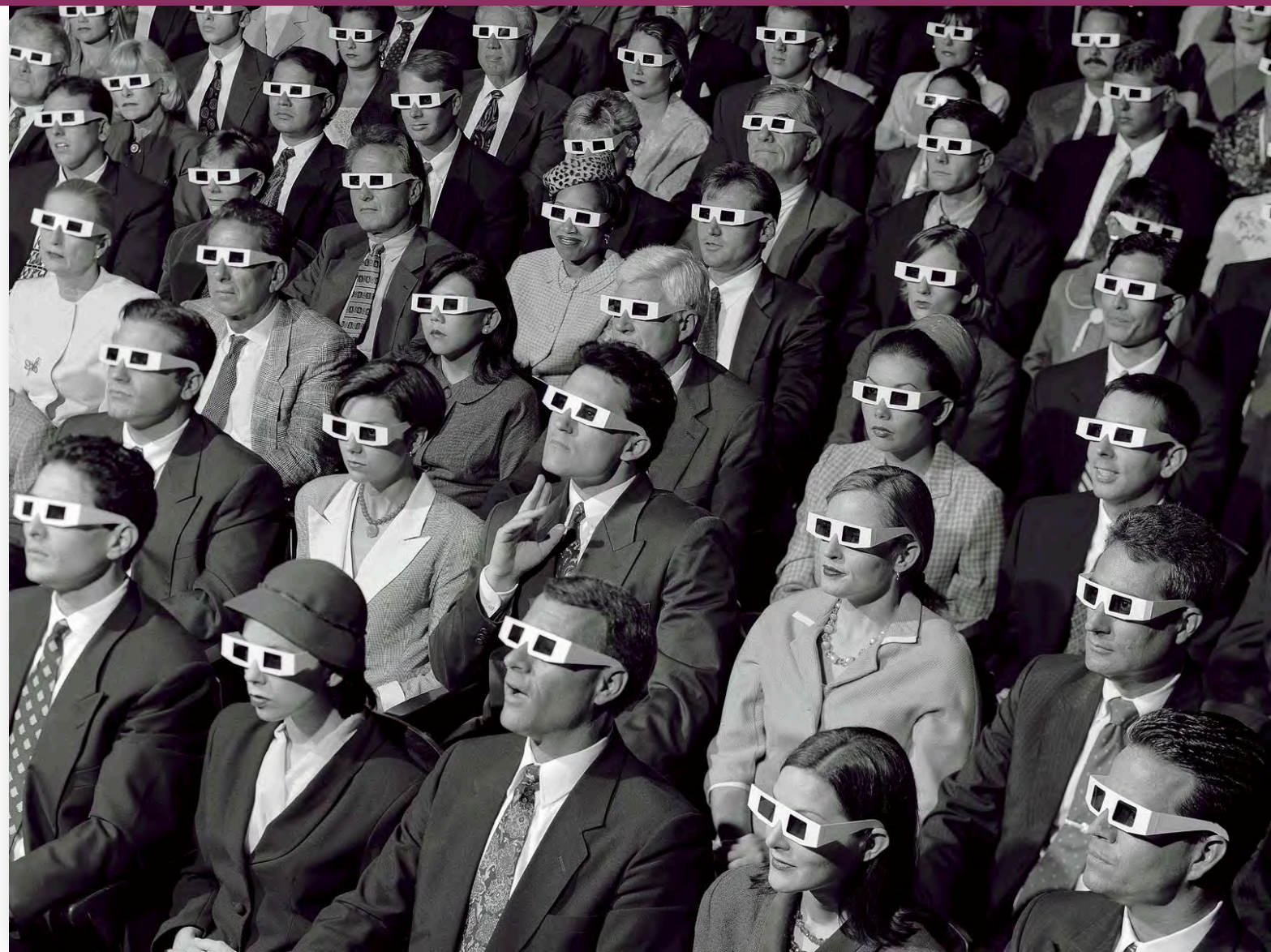
Overview

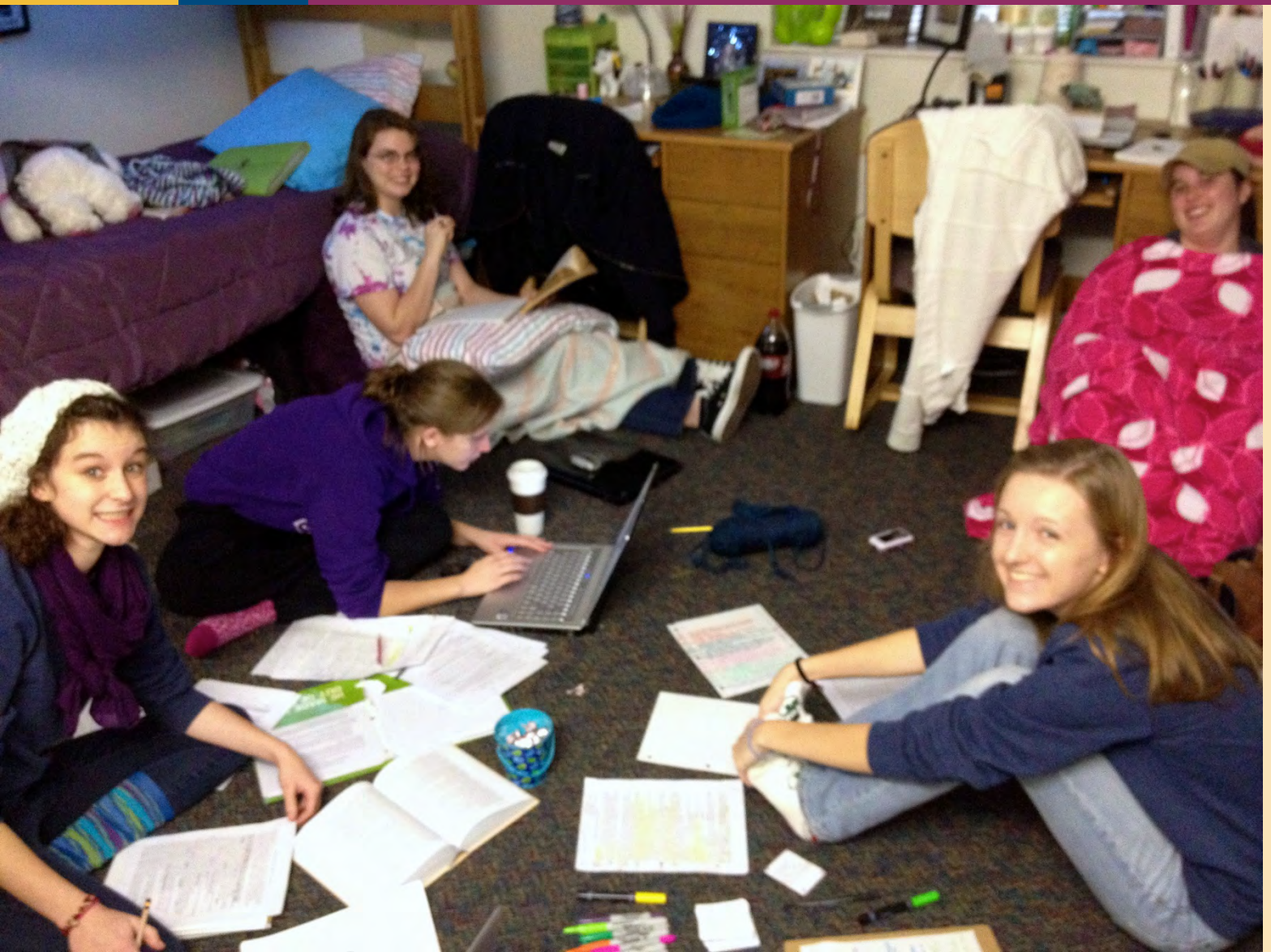
- **Review of Literature – What do we know about living on campus?**
- **Brief Review of NSSE**
- **Summary of Findings**
  - **ACUHO-I 2015**
  - **ACPA 2015 & NASPA 2015**
  - **ACUHO-I 2016**
- **Reflection and Discussion**
- **Q & A**

Who is in the audience?

- ❑ Graduate student
- ❑ Entry-level professional
- ❑ Mid-level professional
- ❑ Senior-level professional
- ❑ Faculty
- ❑ Other?



To Start...



From your perspective, what is it about living on campus that matters?

The residence hall environment is “perhaps the single most consistent within-college determinant of the impact of college” (p. 611)

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)

What do we know about on-campus living?

Historically, positive effects of living on campus

- **Belonging**
- **Engagement and involvement**
- **Openness to diversity**
- **Persistence**
- **GPA**

(Astin, 1985; Blimling,1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2010; Pike, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991)

Residence Hall Design

Different types of residence halls, such as suite-style versus traditional dormitories, can have an impact on student interactions.

(Brandon, Hirt, and Cameron, 2008; Owens, 2010; Palmer, Broido, & Campbell, 2008)

Students in traditional halls have more frequent interactions with other residents than their counterparts in suite-style halls.

(Brandon, Hirt, and Cameron, 2008)

Roommates

Another consideration is whether or not students live in “singles.”

Students living alone report lower levels of peer belonging than their counterparts living with roommates.

(Dumford, Ribera, & Miller, 2015).

Peer Influence: Positives

Peer influence is an important factor in student success.

(Astin,1993; de Araujo and Murray, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1984)

"Finally, the single most important environmental influence on student development is the peer group. By judicious and imaginative use of peers groups, any college or university can substantially strengthen its impact on student learning and personal development."

(Astin, 1993, p. xxii)

Peer Influence: Potential Negatives

Recent studies emphasize that the effects of living on campus can vary by different student subpopulations and across different institutional types.

(Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schudde, 2011; Strayhorn and Mullins, 2012; Turley & Wodtke, 2010)

African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American students experienced over 70 distinct racial microaggressions while living in residence halls.

(Harwood, Huntt, Mendenhall & Lewis, 2012)

Amenities

Off-campus facilities close to campus can offer the same benefits of on-campus housing without the supervision of official college personnel.

(Kolstad, 2015)

"What were once considered to be luxuries in student housing—kitchens, private bedrooms, private bathrooms, social spaces and lounges—are now expected."

(La Roche, Flanigan, and Copeland Jr., 2010, p. 46)

Programming

Residence life and housing professions believe an important benefit to living on campus is the educational programming offered.

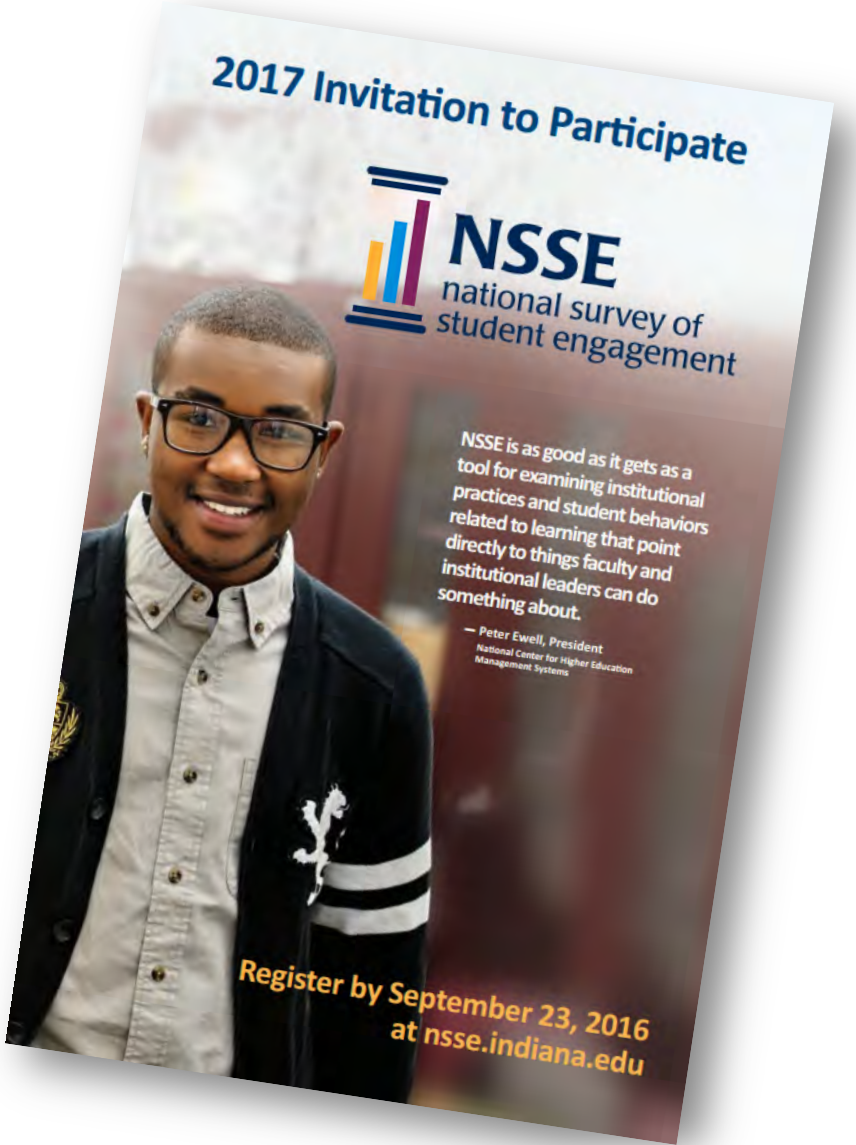
(Blimling, Whitt, & Associates, 1999; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005)

The positive effects of living on campus “are typically the result of *purposeful, programmatic* efforts to integrate students’ intellectual and socai lives during college.”

(Terenzini and Pascarella, 1997, p. 178)

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

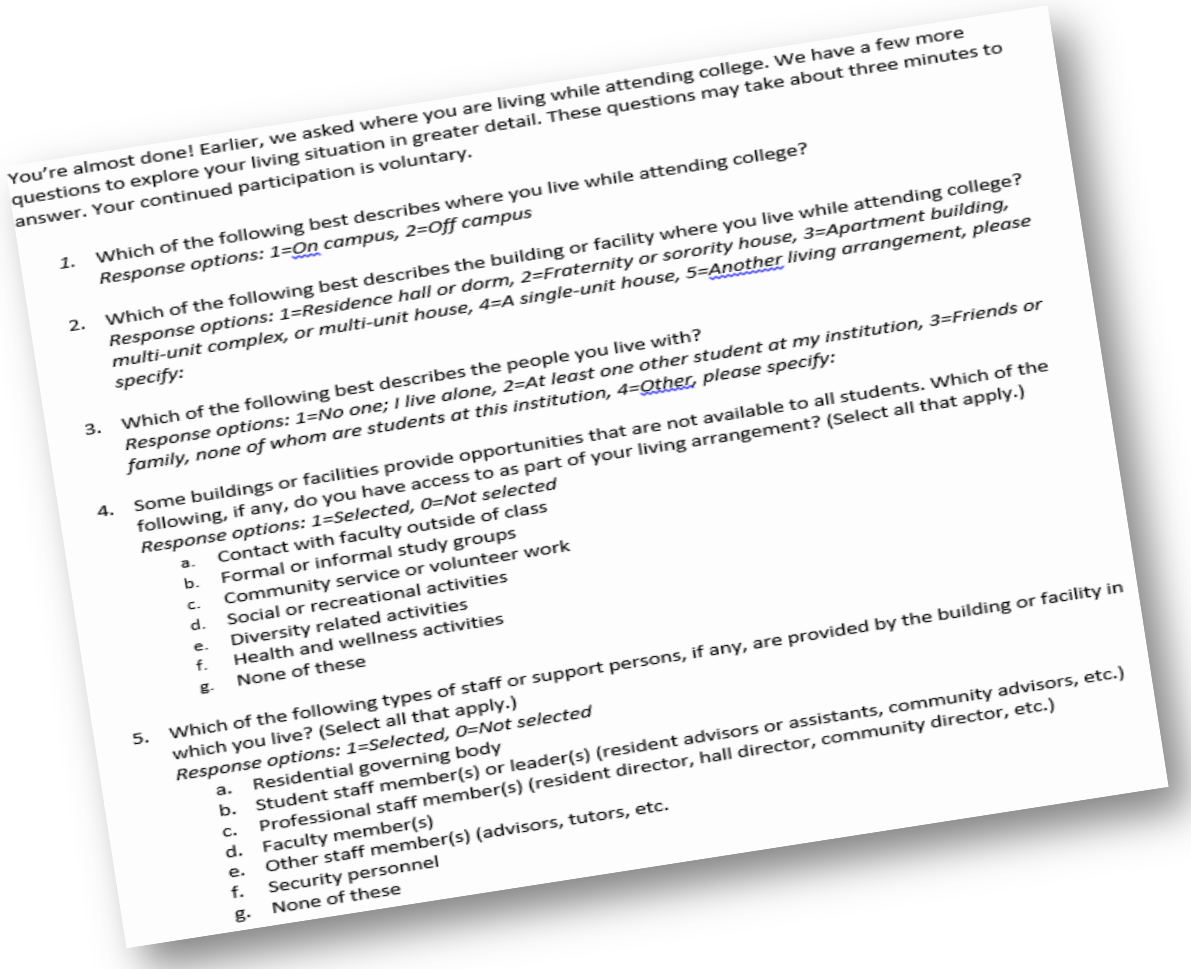
- **Large-scale, multi institutional survey administered annually to first-year and senior baccalaureate seeking students**
- **Asks students questions about their engagement in educationally purposeful in-class and out-of-class activities**
- **Focus on diagnostic & actionable information**
- **10 Engagement Indicators and 6 High-Impact Practices**



Engagement Indicators

Themes	*Engagement Indicators*
Academic Challenge	**Higher-Order Learning** **Reflective & Integrative Learning** **Learning Strategies** **Quantitative Reasoning**
Learning with Peers	**Collaborative Learning** **Discussions with Diverse Others**
Experiences with Faculty	**Student-Faculty Interaction** **Effective Teaching Practices**
Campus Environment	**Quality of Interactions** **Supportive Environment**

Question Set: Living Environments



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1. Which of the following best describes where you live while attending college?
   Response options: 1=On campus, 2=Off campus
2. Which of the following best describes the building or facility where you live while attending college?
   Response options: 1=Residence hall or dorm, 2=Fraternity or sorority house, 3=Apartment building, multi-unit complex, or multi-unit house, 4=A single-unit house, 5=Another living arrangement, please specify:
3. Which of the following best describes the people you live with?
   Response options: 1=No one; I live alone, 2=At least one other student at my institution, 3=Friends or family, none of whom are students at this institution, 4=Other, please specify:
4. Some buildings or facilities provide opportunities that are not available to all students. Which of the following, if any, do you have access to as part of your living arrangement? (Select all that apply.)
   Response options: 1=Selected, 0=Not selected
   a. Contact with faculty outside of class
   b. Formal or informal study groups
   c. Community service or volunteer work
   d. Social or recreational activities
   e. Diversity related activities
   f. Health and wellness activities
   g. None of these
5. Which of the following types of staff or support persons, if any, are provided by the building or facility in which you live? (Select all that apply.)
   Response options: 1=Selected, 0=Not selected
   a. Residential governing body
   b. Student staff member(s) or leader(s) (resident advisors or assistants, community advisors, etc.)
   c. Professional staff member(s) (resident director, hall director, community director, etc.)
   d. Faculty member(s)
   e. Other staff member(s) (advisors, tutors, etc.
   f. Security personnel
   g. None of these

- **Findings from 2013 & 2014 NSSE at 2015 ACUHO-I Annual Conference**
- **Based on feedback on our session we drafted an item set**
- **Items were reviewed by a number of survey design experts as well as ACUHO-I staff**
- **Items were appended to 2016 NSSE for select institutions**
- **Institutions had the opportunity to decline the items**

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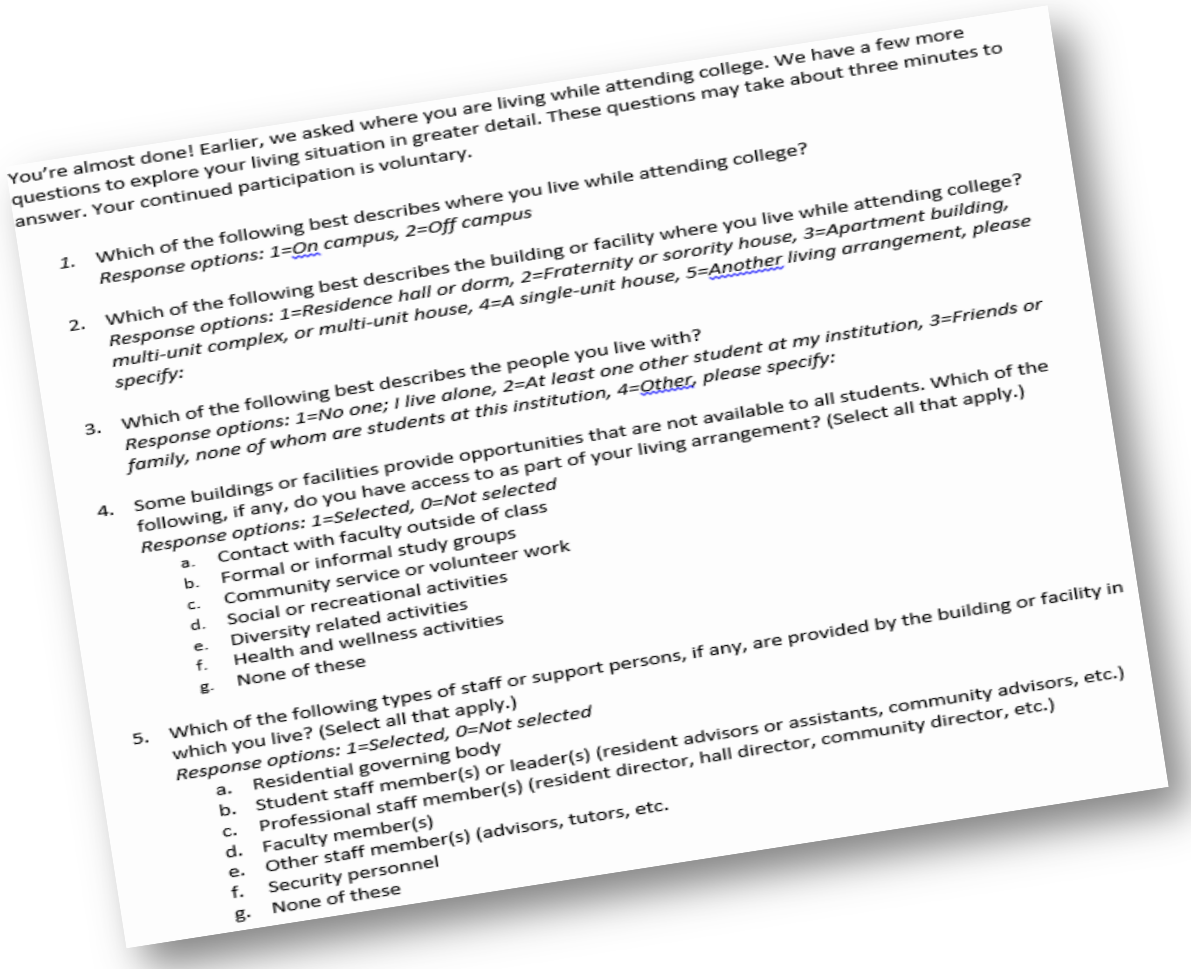

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Topics include:

- ❑ Type of building or facility where students live
- ❑ Type of people with whom the student lives
- ❑ Opportunities available through the living place
- ❑ Types of staff or support persons provided by the living place
- ❑ Living-learning and thematic communities
- ❑ Perceptions of safety and community in the living place

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g. None of these

6. Does your living arrangement include a program where groups of residents take at least one class together and attend common educational and social programs (often called a "living-learning community")?
Response options: 1=Yes, 0=No

7. Does your living arrangement have a designated theme or focus?
Response options: 1=Yes, 0=No

7b. If yes, which of the following best describes the focus or theme?
Response options: 1=Honors, 2=International or language, 3=Identity group (race or ethnicity, LGBT, etc.), 4=Fraternity or sorority, 5=Athletics, 6=Academic major, 7=Sustainability, 8=Social justice or diversity, 9=Leadership, 10=Technology, 11=Health and wellness, 12=Substance free living, 13=Creative or performing arts, 14=Other, please specify:

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Response options: 5=Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly disagree

a. I feel physically safe in the building or facility where I live
b. I feel free from harassment and discrimination in the building or facility where I live
c. I feel a sense of community in the building or facility or where I live
d. I know how to resolve conflicts that might arise within my living arrangement
e. I feel academically supported in the building or facility where I live

9. About how long does it take to get to your classes from where you live?
Response options: 0=0 minutes, 1=1 to 5 minutes, 2=6 to 10 minutes, 3=11 to 15 minutes, 4=16 to 20 minutes, 5=More than 20 minutes

10. How would you evaluate your overall experience with the building or facility where you live while attending college?
Response options: 4=Excellent, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor

How would you expect students' living environments to relate to student engagement and success in college?

Summary of Findings

ACUHO-I 2015

- **2013-2014 NSSE Sample**
- **Descriptive analysis**
- **Focused on:**
  - **Students' Time Use**
  - **Quality of Interaction items**
  - **Supportive Environment items**
  - **Diverse Interactions items**
  - **Student-Faculty Interaction items**
  - **Demographics- Sex, Race, and Institution Type**

Broadly speaking:

- **Minor differences found between students living on campus and students living *farther than* walking distance.**
- **Negligible differences between students living on campus and students living *within* walking distance.**

Summary of Findings

ACPA/NASPA 2016

- **2014-2015 NSSE Sample**
- **Block Hierarchical Regression**
- **Focused on:**
  - **Time preparing for class**
  - **Collaborative Learning EI**
  - **Discussions with Diverse Others EI**
  - **Student-Faculty Interaction EI**
  - **Quality of Interactions EI**
  - **Supportive Environment EI**
  - **Perceived co-curricular gains**

We found only trivial differences in engagement, perceived gains, and time spent based on where students lived (on campus, *within* walking distance, and *farther* than walking distance).

Summary of Findings

ACUHO-I 2016

- 2016 Living Environments question set
- Correlational analysis
- First-year, on-campus students
- Focus on:
  - Access to personnel, amenities, and programming

- Living-learning communities
  - More interaction with faculty, felt more supported on campus, had an increased sense of personal development
- Access to professional and student staff
  - Felt more supported on campus
- Access to study groups
  - Felt more supported on campus, especially academically

Summary of Findings

ACUHO-I 2016

- 2016 Living Environments question set
- Correlational analysis
- First-year, on-campus students
- Focus on:
  - Access to personnel, amenities, and programming

- Access to diversity-related activities
  - More discussions with diverse others
- Access to faculty outside of class
  - More interaction with faculty
- Did not have access to study groups, faculty, community service, social activities, diversity activities, or wellness activities
  - Felt less supported on campus and had a decreased sense of personal development

Summary of Findings

ACUHO-I 2016

- 2016 Living Environments question set
- Descriptive analysis
- Focused on:
  - Safety and community items Demographics: Race, Sex, First-Generation Status, and Sexual Orientation

- Students differ by demographics in their perceptions of physical safety, discrimination, sense of community and academic support. For example,
  - Black/AA students & First-Gen students feel less physically safe and free from discrimination.
  - LGBQ students feel less of a sense of community.
  - Asian American students felt more academically supported.
- No major differences in academic support. Generally, about 25% of students “strongly agree” they are academically supported.

Reflection and Discussion

What do these findings mean for Residence Life and Housing professionals?

Consider:

- ✓ Programming
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Initiatives
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Housing options
- ✓ Generational student characteristics
- ✓ Further research

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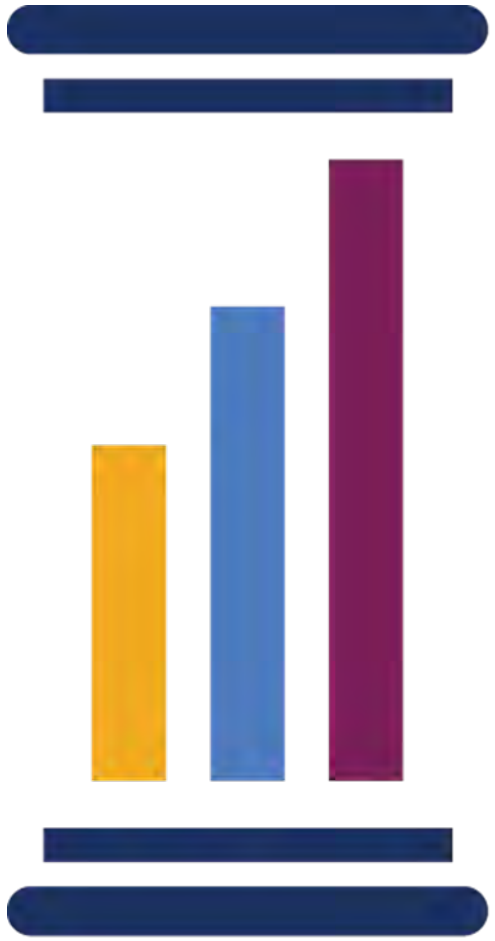

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