

SUMMARY of Grad Housing SGCC Focus Group

Thu Jul 29, 2021 - 5 -6pm

Host: Stuart Craddock

Note-taker: Franco Solimano

Participants: CLV winter residents

Focus Group Topics & Student Feedback Themes

- **CLV layout and townhouses**
 - CLV units are close to campus, and surrounded by greenspaces. It is a great community to go for long walks in the daytime or evening. Night time walks feel safe. And it is great to be so close to nature!
 - Breakdown of space is positive and a good amount of room for one person or to share with 1-3 others.
- **General Response to Maintenance Requests**
 - Overall, response from participants on facilities level of service was high this term. Residents spoke to positive experiences, to feeling supported by the facilities team and Campus Housing, to timely responses to reported issues, and to positive experiences with maintenance staff.
 - Feedback for future was to consider improving window screen gaps, and how to better support residents with managing regular household bugs that live in the CLV area (e.g., preventing outdoor spiders or bugs from entering when windows/doors are left open).
- **Campus Housing Communications**
 - Generally, feedback regarding communication from Campus Housing is positive. Emails from Campus Housing and from CLV Maintenance are both clear and helpful.
 - Feedback was shared for maintenance teams to be as specific as possible in their maintenance schedules, and to provide as small as possible windows of time (e.g., “expect someone to come by between these hours”, etc.).
 - Emails were also highlighted as the preferred approach, and where possible to also communicate through other platforms. Participants discussed what a more aligned multi-channel approach could look like, e.g., share same message through multiple ways – like social, email, laundry room, etc. The risk of relying exclusively on email is that it can be missed! However, several participants recognized that it is the responsibility of the student to be aware of and read email messages.
 - Suggestions were made to include welcome packages that would have been nice and helpful when someone is new – particularly if they arrive mid-term! And to share more proactively what communication channels exist as soon as students arrive (e.g., wall poster or letter that says “these are our channels!”). Kind of like when you check in to a hotel room: and you learn about all the different ways you can connect with others (through IG, for emergencies, for maintenance, etc.).
 - Front Desk and Grad Dons are a helpful resource during orientation or when a student-moves in.
 - All of this feedback was shared with appropriate Campus Housing staff/teams.

- **Eligibility to Remain in Residence**

- Overall, there was agreement in discussion that all eligible residents must be a graduate student (Masters, PhD, etc.) to move-in and remain in Graduate Housing. Participants acknowledged that there are waitlists for Grad Housing, so it is understandable that if a student becomes inactive or degree complete, that they have to move-out.
- Recommendations were made to be as transparent and possible in eligibility policies, - e.g., proactively emailing this out or including in welcome kit – so that those moving in are well informed on what eligibility criteria and processes are.
- There was consensus that currently enrolled students should have priority for Graduate Housing bedspaces over recently graduate alumni. And although there should be flexibility for recently graduated alumni, limits should exist for how much can be extended, so that it doesn't take away from support and bedspaces available for currently enrolled grad students.
- With that said, flexibility should exist to support graduating alumni, as it helps with life planning and unique graduation timelines (which can come FAST, and/or are not always aligned with academic calendars)

- **Community Programs & Events**

- General positive feedback about community programs – with acknowledgment that lots of activities and events were being organized/offered by the Grad Don team (kudos!).
- Comments spoke to how programs can make the community memorable, and how getting residents outside and meeting neighbours has been helpful to remain connected with others during the isolation of the pandemic.
- In winter, it can become challenging for international graduate students to stay connected. Additional virtual networking events (or other creative virtual programs) would be helpful to create connections between residents when they immediately move in to the community.
- Self-organized community events – e.g., self-organized football or basketball activities, or CLV bike rides – tend to have the most success in attendance and engagement, as it invites community members to be actively invested in programs/events.
- Variety in virtual vs in-person, and in timing of events/programs, continues to be important to meet all types of student availability e.g., morning, midday, evening, weekends, etc.
- Overall, the Microsoft Teams for the CLV Community is a really helpful forum.
- All of these ideas – positive (and constructive) – were shared with Residence Life staff, to be incorporate in future programs and events

Other Additional feedback/questions shared:

- There were comments on the bathroom sizes in CLV-South being too small. It can be difficult (or uncomfortable) to accommodate a very tall person.
- One participant suggested unit touch-ups before any mid-term arrivals, particularly as international students might arrive after long travels. Campus Housing is their home and this would add to the feeling of being welcomed into a clean unit – even when its mid-term. Otherwise, they really enjoyed their CLV experience so far.