SINGLE GRADUATE CONSULATIVE COUNCIL
DOOR KNOCKING CAMPAIGN

HELD ON: JULY 19, 2017 | CLV GRADUATE COMMUNITY

On Wednesday July 19, members of the senior management team and the CLV Graduate Operations Committee knocked on doors throughout the community to chat with students about topics they felt were relevant to graduate housing.

The objective of the evening was to:

- Provide single graduate students with the opportunity to share their feedback on all major issues related to living accommodations in Waterloo Residences.
- Provide single graduate students with an outlet to share what they enjoy about living in CLV, and to raise questions or concerns on topics relevant to a single graduate student’s stay in Waterloo Residences.
- Create transparency with decisions and practices which affect a single graduate student’s stay in Waterloo Residences.
- Gather meaningful information about the grad experience.

WATERLOO STAFF MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Glen Weppler** (Director of Housing),
- **Mike Iley** (Assistant Director, Residence Facilities)
- **Alex Pittico** (Director, Student Development and Residence Life)
- **Pam De Leo** (CLV Residence Life Co-coordinator)
- **Sheila Goodwin** (Manager, External Services)
- **Megan Lambe** (Graduate Residence Admissions and Marketing Specialist)
- **Lisa Williamson** (Coordinator, External Services)
- **Melissa Mc-Nown Smith** (Manager, Living-Learning)
- **Karen Howey** (Manager, Cleaning Services)
- **Sherry Kihut** (Manager, Residence Business Technology and Systems)
- **Christy Elliot** (Manager, Housing Finance)

Staff were divided into teams to engage in discussion with residents of the CLVN community. In total, we engaged with 27 students to gain valuable feedback on how to make CLV the best place for graduates to live.

EVENT COMMUNICATION

The event was communicated to students through the following methods:

- CLV July e-Newsletter
- Posters at CLV Community Centre
- CLV Graduate Community Facebook Page
- CLV community breakfasts
- Direct email communication from CLV Programmer
- Posting in the Weekend Idea
- Direct email communication from Waterloo Residences sent through Mailchimp (from Glen)

Residents were asked to respond using an online form with any questions ahead of time, and invited to submit questions via the CLV Facebook page. Families were emailed the day of SGDKC to alert them the event would be happening in the community, and to outline the reasons for the campaign. At this time we also invited feedback from families should they have any concerns. Only two students expressed interest by email.
SUCCESS AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

The team was happy to receive numerous positive comments from current residents about how they enjoy living in the Graduate community, and concerns they have or would like addressed.

Residents highlighted the following (categorized by Housing unit):

ADMISSIONS

Success

- Application was easy to find and use
- Staff is quick to help answer questions

Key Takeaways

- Fall renewal process too early (small percentage in agreement)
- Appeal process not very convenient
- Concern about cost being too high for product offered
- Rooms are different sizes but students pay the same rate. Request for more transparency
- Communication around move out dates and process
- Better degree complete process and communications
  - Are students deemed ineligible and are they required to leave early?
  - Consider a prorated contract
  - Make clear what process is before term begins

FACILITIES

Success

- Environment and layout perfect for student needs
- Quick snow removal
- Maintenance related issues dealt with in thorough and timely manner
- Love the new mattresses!

Key Takeaways

- **Air conditioning (over 50% of students expressed a need/strong interest for)**
- Request for a car battery charger for energy efficient cars
- Insects/spiders
- Larger beds
- No crosswalk for shuttle
- Concern about monitoring (bike stolen)
- Parking: share information/access/educate
  - Cost should be free for residents
- Students disappointed in compost program being shut down
  - Concern over the quality of its maintenance while here (smell et cetera)
RESIDENCE LIFE AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

- Community breakfasts
- Room change process easy, special mention of Pam
- Great people and love the diversity of the community
- Quiet and safe (good “down zone” from stress of studies)
- Those who attend events consider them a great way to meet people in the community, and helpful for connecting
- Many residents mentioned the shuttle as a key benefit of living in CLV
  - “Great in winter as public transportation is unreliable”
  - “Best thing about living here. A major benefit to living at CLV”

Key Takeaways

- Noise from playground distracting for grad students
- Alternate options for time of programs (conflict with evening programming)
- Provide alternate opportunity for orientation if student can’t attend due to schedule
- See notes in CLV Programming section (below)

CLV PROGRAMMING

While several students indicated isolation was an issue in their community and had an interest in attending programming, many also indicated that due to academic schedule, they are unable to participate in activities aimed at integrating into the community at CLV.

Some suggestions for future events include:

- Counselling/mental health support available at CLV
- Movie night (potentially outdoors)
- Game night (hockey, basketball, etc.)
- International cooking nights (continue and include more countries)
- BBQ
GRADUATE STUDENT STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

One objective of this door knocking campaign was to use information gathered through EBI specific to graduate stress. One key finding through EBI was a low score rating on the question, To what extent do you agree with the statements:

- As a result of my experience living on campus, I have found it easier to cope with stressful times.
- I feel like someone in residence would notice if I were in need of assistance.

Questions discussed with students included:

- What creates stress for graduate students?
- What people, services or activities would help graduate students manage stress?

KEY THEMES

The top listed stress points for graduates include:

- **Roommates (by far the largest stress)**
  - “I don’t feel welcome in my own home”
  - “We have no conversation with each other”
  - Household chores and division of tasks not equal
  - Hard to know who to go to, and what to do, to solve these issues
- Academic pressure/competition and deadlines
- Balancing work/life balance (meal prep, cleaning etc.)
- Isolation
- Lack of free time or down time
- Student to supervisor meetings
- Balancing finances (especially for International students)

The top listed strategies for managing stress include:

- **Accessing Counselling on campus (individual and peer [MATES] supports - by far the most used resource)**
- Exercise (both at a gym and in nature [hikes/walks])
- Group activities (when there is time)
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were key considerations or concerns for Housing and Residences to consider. Recommendations included, but open for feedback and insight from others within our department.

1. **Roommate Issues**
   A number of students brought issues forward about difficulty dealing with roommate issues ranging from cleaning to general communication.

   **RECOMMENDATION:**
   - CLV Operations Committee to work together to develop updates for Orientation that speak to these concerns, and the resources available to students to mediate.
   - Speak to and highlight specific value-add to students to feel more equipped with life skills/soft skills, empowered to advocate for their needs, and a general strategy for navigating difficult social issues.
   - Highlight resources available in grad e-news.

2. **Access to Supports On Campus to Manage Stress**
   Helping graduate students to understand their stress is normal, and that their peers access resources to support them, is a great support in working toward ending stigma and improving positive mental health culture on campus.

   **RECOMMENDATION:**
   - Include NEW! Mental Health and Wellness Guide (PGO2 Project) in Orientation and highlight these are well-used supports with graduates.
   - Continue to promote resources through e-news, social media, and other means especially during specific times of year when student stress runs high.
   - Wait for directives from PAC-SMH committee and potentially revisit this topic in winter 2018 term.

3. **Degree Complete Procedures**
   The process for students who become degree complete during their stay at CLV is not clear to residents. The process is also executed on a case by case basis and left to the discretion of the RLC.

   **RECOMMENDATION:**
   - A decision has been made that students who become degree complete during the term will be able to finish their stay with us should they require.
CLVN Operations committee will consult with Residence Life to establish a process that allows graduate students who complete their degree to receive approval for staying in residence. This process would include the following steps:

- Timeline for when student must notify Residence Life of degree completion and request approval to remain in residence.
- Timeline and guidelines for submission of documentation that supports why the student must remain in residence (e.g., letter from supervisor or faculty member outlining work/research student is doing).
- Template for communication back to student (e.g., if request is approved emphasizing to student that they are still under the terms and conditions, asking students to notify maintenance of their planned move-out date).

Once established, changes will be shared by:

- Updated content on Housing website
- Amended policy shared by social media and e-news with current students
- Communicated during the next door knocking campaign
- Communication to the GSPO and GSA
- Used as an active marketing initiative to gain interest from students at renewal time.

Include in 2018/2019 terms and conditions

**CLV Programming**

While a number of students referenced feeling isolated and lonely and have difficulty with work/life balance, many also indicated they don’t have time to attend programming within the CLV Community.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Speak directly in marketing to the value-add that students will receive in programming while actively considering the large percentage of highly technical/analytical students in our community.
- Consider alternate program times (potential morning/afternoon).
- Create continued opportunity for feedback from students about what kinds of events they are looking for.
- Consider alternate means of engagement and community building such as:
  - Student blog
  - Facebook live events
  - Field trips such as museums, science related issues
- Continued partnership with CLV Programmer and GRAMS to discuss emergent marketing opportunities and ideas (worked well this term).

**5. Reiteration of Previous Issues from Fall SGDKC**

Some of the issues discussed at previous Single Grad Consultative Councils and Door Knocking Campaign came up and are still areas of concern for students. These include:

- Household bugs in CLV-North units
- Crosswalk at Columbia
RECOMMENDATION:

- Continue to share results on Housing website
- Communicate to residents that findings are available through e-news and CLV Facebook page
- Share previous session’s results in anticipation of upcoming events so students are aware of the previous issues and discussion beforehand
- Continue to use engagement opportunities at SG Consultative Council and SG Door Knocking Campaigns to manage expectations (bugs are normal in Canada, clarification on crosswalk next steps for student advocacy needed, etc.)

NEXT SGCC SESSION:
TBD