



# RHA Town Hall

Hosted By: CSULA Residence Hall Association

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## Our Panelists



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## RHA Board



### Pictured Left to Right

Madison McGuire  
*Director of Finance*

Korede Shittu  
*Director of Service*

Alyssa Madewell  
*President*

Miracle Coleman  
*Director of Programming*

Jason Angulo  
*National Communications Coordinator*

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## Things to Note

Anything notated with a superscript <sup>(#)</sup> will have its relevant note in the footnote (bottom) of the same page it is found on.

Anything notated with a subscript <sub>(#)</sub> will have its relevant link listed with the corresponding number on the “**Resource References**” page.

Some moments of the recorded audio were not clearly picked up, which meant that it could not be properly transcribed. Those moment will be notated as “(...)”

For the “**RHA Provided Questions**” section, panelists are asked questions in their order of introduction.

For the “**Student Submitted Questions**” section, the RHA team created a form where residents could submit questions that they wanted to be answered by the Housing and Residence Life or Village Dining management. There was also a table in the entrance of the Dining Commons one night where residents could write a question on an index card and put it into the adjacent submission box. These questions were asked to the entire panel instead of a singular panelist.

For the “**Open Mic / Instagram Live Questions**” section, in-person audience members and Instagram Live viewers were given the opportunity to ask or comment a question they had. Instagram Live questions were asked by a member of the RHA board. These questions were asked to the entire panel instead of a singular panelist.



## **Panelist Introductions**

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## Panelist Introductions

**Luis:** Luis Roldan, Director of Housing and Residence Life. I have been here for about six months now. Prior to that, I've worked at CUNY<sup>2</sup> over in New York City and was fortunate enough to have this opportunity to come about, and I felt it was a wonderful change in space for me and the opportunity to work with a brand-new team. So, I've been here since September.

**Elba:** Hi everyone, my name is Elba Mandujano, and I serve as the Associate Director for Residence Life. I have the opportunity to oversee Residence Life. That includes our Residence Life Coordinators, which are professional staff, Resident Assistants, and Student Leaders. So that also includes community mentors, student assistants, as well as RHA<sub>1</sub>, which is under the Division of Residence Life. I'm actually coming up on my one-year anniversary in March.

**Lori:** Hello, I am Lori Plekker. I am the Fiscal and Resource Coordinator in Housing. I handle the budget, and I help with the payment plans and student charges and number of different things.

**Vickie:** Hi everyone, I'm Vickie Young. I'm actually part of Compass. We help manage the Dining Hall. I'm the Director of Dining Services here and it's very, very nice to see you all today.

**Chris:** Hi, I'm Christopher Duke<sup>3</sup>. I'm the [Dining] General Manager with Chartwells / Compass Group. I've been at this university since September. I'm a new transfer from Houston, Texas with Chartwells.

**Rene:** Hello everyone, my name is Rene Gonzalez. I've been working for Housing and Residence Life at Cal State LA for three years. I've recently been appointed as the Operations Coordinator. I manage the room assignments and applications. So, anything that has to do with housing applications, I'm the guy.

<sup>2</sup> City University of New York

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Duke will be referred to as "Chris".

**Laura:** I'm Laura Heughens. I'm the Associate Director for Business Operations. My primary role is to oversee the business functions of the department. But I will dabble in the student cases as needed. I'm probably the youngest one in that, not in age, but in the tenure and I've been here almost a month. (...). I'm so glad you all came here to talk to us.

## **RHA Provided Questions**

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## RHA Provided Questions

**Alyssa:** Thank you guys so much. We're very grateful that you guys are able to come and take questions from students, and I want to have these discussions. So, I'm going to pass it to Korede and Madi. We're going to get into some of the questions that we have.

**Madi:** Hello, thank you all for coming. Alright, so the first question we have is for our Director, Luis. “How can housing better support students experiencing financial hardship or housing insecurity?”

**Luis:** All right. This is a very important question and it's floating around not only here at Cal State LA but throughout colleges and universities across the US, right? I don't know how many of you have been following some of the trends and some of the challenges that colleges and universities are having, but a great focus and a great deal of the challenges are based around the number of enrolled students and the decline that that's been having across the U.S. And so, financial hardships are not only being felt by students but also by the colleges and the universities. And there's a constant fight about what we can do to be able to offer better services. What can we do to make sure that we help those students who are enrolled? What can we do to offer support services that can ensure graduation rates? So, it is a problem.

It's a huge dilemma and I think that in many ways, COVID began to expose some of the challenges as colleges fought and tried to figure out how can we offer online and remote services to our students? So, they put a lot of pressure, and it opened the door for students to see that perhaps there are other alternatives and other avenues for us to follow. And so financial hardships again are being felt throughout here at Cal State LA and here in particular with housing, what we are able to do is try to figure out ways to put forth some flex payments for students so that you don't necessarily have to come out of pocket the beginning of the semester, that you have an opportunity to divvy up those payments. We're trying to find ways to get creative with some of those, some of the finances, and how we do it.

We're trying to figure out how to work with Dining Services to figure out how the meal plans can also be managed. We're working also with the Dean of Students<sup>2</sup> office to provide additional food pantry services, basic needs funding, trying to figure out what scholarships can be applied for housing. We are developing partnerships with some of our local community resources, things such as, or companies like the United Way of Greater LA<sup>3</sup>, the Los Angeles Harbor College<sup>4</sup>, the “I Have A Dream” Foundation<sup>5</sup>, the YMCA of Metro LA<sup>6</sup>. These are all



institutions that have reached out to us in trying to figure out what we can do to be able to help.

And at the same time, you know, you guys saw the assessment tool<sup>4</sup> that we put out. We're trying to figure out and better understand, you know, how do we help students? What can we do? How can we put ourselves out there to ensure that not only are you guys having a good quality of life here, but also one that, you know, is in some way, shape or form affordable. At the end of the day, Housing and Residence Life operates as a self-supported entity of Cal State LA.

So, this building that we're in has a mortgage, for example, right? And these are things that we have to pay for. If it were to me and if I had all the power, I would love to have students just come in and live here free and enjoy their time at Cal State LA. But unfortunately, it is also an operation that needs to be sustained for it to be available. So, we have some things in mind. We are working with some companies. We are trying to figure out how to balance things out. But I gave you the intro to share with you all that it's something that's being felt across the US and across the institution.

I'll end with this. I don't know how many of you have been up in the news that are coming from Cal State LA and CSU's, there is a major deficit and so they're going to be, you know having cuts all around to balance things out. So, it's a serious issue. It's a serious problem. You know, I'm dedicated to this team. Not only to the team but also to the institution and to the students and to trying to figure out ways that we can make this sustainable for everybody. And I'm sure there'll be follow-up questions and I'm more than happy to dab on those.

**Korede:** Our second question is, “Is there an evacuation plan in place in the event of another nearby fire threat?”

**Luis:** So, I hope not, I hope that we don't encounter any type of issue like that. But the one that we just experienced, in fact, some of you may know that there was a possibility of some students from UCLA being evacuated and we offered to help if they, in fact, needed to be evacuated. And so that gave us the practice of being able to plan things out, to be able to have buses for transportation, connect with local hotels in the area to figure out if we too needed to evacuate, what would we do?

So, I'm happy to say that we have a plan in place now. It is by no means polished. And I say that to say that any type of emergency could be different, right? I mean, we can certainly connect with hotels near, I don't know, Pasadena. And then if the danger is coming from Pasadena, we have to figure out an alternative way to go. So, but we do have a plan in place.

We are also working on another piece of the puzzle, which is trying to figure out security for our towers, because one of the things that came to light because of the fires was being aware

<sup>4</sup>“Your Feedback Matters! Complete the Housing Quality of Life Assessment” – Email sent by Housing on 21 Nov 2024.

of who was in the building at what time. If anything were to happen, we would know who was where.

So, these are things, a lot of things that came to light when we were discussing a plan of action. So, I'm happy to say we have a plan in place now. Again, it is by no means a polished product. There are many variables that come with dealing with an emergency. But we're in a much better place than we were before the fires.

**Madi:** Okay. “Are there any plans to expand housing options or add new residence halls?”

**Luis:** Great question. So, the short answer is no. And the reality again is that right now we are hovering somewhere around 65, 68% capacity, meaning that we have a lot of available spaces yet to be filled. For those of you who may not know, these buildings are about three years old. Anybody here who's a fourth-year student? Alright so those of you who are fourth year students probably were here before, right? Were you guys [the audience] here, I see, before South Village opened?

**Jason:** I got here probably at opening.

**Luis:** Okay, great. So, these are new. I don't know if there was a plan in place. Again, I started this past September. I don't know if there was a plan in place to just open South Village and spend some time repairing and fixing the apartments. As you guys may know, those apartments are from the 80s. In fact, they were built for the Olympics here in LA. So, they're weathered. You know, they have their own share of issues. I'm working, I have a plan in place. In fact, I'm trying to put together a five-year plan for Housing and Residence Life that will take this department, you know, onto the next stage. And part of that plan is figuring out ways to work to try to repair the apartments. And so, for right now, you know, we really, really, before we even add anything else, we really need to figure out how do we have, how do we take what we have right now, fix it, you know, improve the quality of life of our clients, of our students. And then from there, if we are fortunate enough to get back to a good enrollment number and things are working, potentially expand.

I would personally love; I'm a fan of Greek life on campus. I would love to be able to acquire some houses nearby and bring perhaps Greek life and some additional fun to the campus and I would say before I even think about expanding housing, we'd love to have the opportunity to expand services here. Bring some fun, bring an arcade room, bring things that would keep

students here over the weekend. Places for students to gather, congregate, have fun. Because in my opinion, it is the one thing that's heavily missed here. It's the fact that once the Dining Village closes, it's like the lights are out. And so, we need to have that type of excitement here that is going to grab students and say, no, no, I want to live on campus. I want to be there. So, prior to thinking about expanding, I'm thinking about how do I make this place better? How do I fix the challenges that we have facility-wise? And how do we expand to make this place more attractive?

**Madi:** Our first question for Elba is “How does Housing address conflict between roommates or suitemates beyond mediation?”

**Elba:** All right. So how does housing address conflict between roommates and suitemates beyond mediation? Great question. So, I want to create a foundation for this question because I think it's super important so we kind of understand the process of what happens after the mediation. And so anytime that residents join us in Housing, one of the very things that residents are asked to do by their RAs in the community is complete a roommate agreement. Those roommate agreements are extremely important to support the facilitation of living with other folks that folks are sharing space with. And so, this roommate agreement for folks that have completed it, which I think everybody in this space [South Village MPR] has, really gives an opportunity for folks to be able to discuss everything, right? How do folks feel about guests coming over? How do folks feel about music in the space, study hours, sleeping hours, to really help kind of set the foundation for how folks are going to be able to cohabitate together.

And so that first step is extremely important because as we know, right, sometimes things still might come up. And so, in those situations, we always refer to that roommate agreement, right, because that roommate agreement is the first foundation. We recognize that sometimes roommate agreements might change, and that's because you might think about something, something that when folks start transitioning in, it's an exciting time, and they want to start off great, so they sometimes might agree to everything. Like yes, I like that, I like that, I like that. And then when folks are living with each other, some of those things might change.

And so, in those cases, roommate mediations are extremely helpful in that situation. RA's and student leaders within Residence Life are trained so they can facilitate roommate mediations. And so oftentimes the first question is always, have you had a roommate mediation? Have you checked in with your RA? And that's because they're specifically trained to facilitate those spaces. And so, once that mediation happens, part of that conversation is addressing any of the concerns that are happening and then potential solutions for both sides to figure out if the roommate agreement needs to be modified, to figure out if there's something else that needs to be included that probably wasn't previously (...) up to include those specific guidelines. If

individuals continue having roommate mediations, I mean sorry, roommate issues after mediation, that's when we really need to start having a conversation about what that situation is.

Now, if a roommate agreement was completed, folks agree to something, and then folks are violating, not following through with the roommate agreement that they've completed, that might lead to a policy violation, depending on what that, what is being broken within the room and everything. Because again, folks have agreed to live in this common space under these circumstances, and then if you're still not following through with what you say you were going to follow through, that can create a potential conversation with a professional staff member.

One of the things to always consider is we always address all incidents that come our way. And we determine based on the need on what is being shared. Oftentimes we've learned that part of the conversation is I have all these issues with my roommate that I've never brought up, right? And I don't want to bring up. And so, in those times, that's when we often encourage residents to connect with their RA or to encourage them to have those conversations with their roommates, because that is going to be a great first step for you to be able to communicate, right? It's really a form of empowerment to support the students to be able to have these conversations.

If I am rooming with Luis, and I am upset at Luis, right? I'm going to, someone's going to encourage me to be like, hey, try to have a conversation with Luis. If I like, I don't feel comfortable having a conversation with Luis okay, as an RA, I'm going to help facilitate that conversation. Right? So that's when that mediation happens.

It's important to also think about, that when things are brought up to us, we always consider the safety and security of the residents. So, if there's a situation in which there's an unsafe environment, right, that is when we're going to add additional steps, right? Put the person in a space where they feel safe. Not everything, right? Like we have to also consider what that need is. Again, oftentimes folks might come and say, hey, I'm having these issues and when we ask, have they communicated, (...) been going on an entire semester and so we want to encourage folks to be able to have a conversation.

Part of being at Cal State LA, being in college, being in the residence halls is really being able to be in opportunities where you're able to develop those communication skills, where you're able to learn from each other, where you're able to engage with folks that might be different than you. And so really, we treat it as a good educational opportunity for folks to be able to navigate those spaces.

**Madi:** “How can ResLife better support students experiencing financial hardship or housing insecurity?”

**Elba:** All right, so I'm not going to reiterate what we said because I think one thing to consider is that Housing and Residence Life is one department, right? We're one unit, we work collectively together, so everything that we said is essentially what ResLife would say. The only thing that I'm going to add is I know, Luis mentioned working with the Dean of Students, so we work closely with the Dean of Students. I'm part of the CARE team<sup>7</sup>, which is an institution committee to support students holistically. And so, when things are brought up to us or when there's someone that is brought up to us through Housing and Residence Life, I do communicate with the CARE team once a week to share. To be able to holistically support this individual from multiple departments as needed. Through basic needs, right, folks can apply to financial support, there's also like CalFresh<sup>8</sup> so those are other support systems that are in place for folks. And we also often, if folks have the ability to go to Financial Aid<sup>9</sup> or receive any type of financial aid, we also encourage folks to go to financial aid to see if there's any additional financial resources that might be available through their office or if there's any type of scholarships, off-campus scholarships that we've learned about, encourage them to apply to those scholarships. We often also provide residents with off-campus resources.

So, we have a list of all campus resources, housing resources that are something that go to residents that if folks are experiencing some sort of housing insecurity or are canceling their contract for some reason and they transition out of Housing, they have some resources in place to support them through that transition. But yes, essentially, those are (...) additional housing resources that are available to residents.

So obviously folks that are residents, know, they live here, as I mentioned, we have a list of off-campus housing resources. The additional things for folks to know is, and this is for folks to be able to share with their friends or their peers that are Cal State LA students that might not be residents, the Dean of Students also has a housing program that folks that might be experiencing some housing insecurity can apply to. And that is through the Dean of Students. It's a 14-day program to really support students that might be facing housing insecurity. So, I just wanted to share that as a resource in case folks have other folks that they want to share that with.

**Korede:** Our first question for Lori is "Are there any financial aid or assistance programs for students struggling with housing costs?"

**Lori:** There are, and I believe Elba and Luis have mentioned pretty much everything. There's the financial aid. We encourage you to accept your student loans if you need to use them.

There's the basic needs through the Dean of Students. They have scholarships and grants that they can grant you if you have an extreme need. And that's, I mean, there's CalFresh and all the other items that Elba mentioned.



**Luis:** The primary thing is to visit the Dean of Students Office. That's number one. And then from there you take it, and you try to figure out, you know, what are the benefits that you can offer. I also want to say, and this is incredible, there is such a, there is such a large amount of money that goes unclaimed on scholarships across the U.S. There's a lot of money that just goes unclaimed because students don't apply for scholarships that are available. So, you just have to go, you have to speak to financial aid, you have to figure out, okay, what are some of the scholarships? They'll give you a list. There are some scholarships that really require you to write a letter to a donor. Has anybody here ever done one of those scholarships? Basically, they want to know your story, they want to know why you have this need, they want to know what you're studying, what program. You write your story, you send it in, and you get scholarship money. There are a lot of scholarships out there, and many of them go unclaimed year after year. If you need financial assistance, my number one advice is to go to the Dean of Students office, try to speak to a financial aid advisor. They have a lot of places and then on top of that you can also google, go online and try to figure out what are some scholarships that I can apply for.

**Madi:** Alright, semi related. “Are there any payment plans available for students who need flexibility with housing payments?”

**Lori:** There are. Luis mentioned earlier, as soon as your housing charges are posted, you can create a payment plan. The earlier you create your payment plan, the more you're able to extend your payments out. If you wait until the last minute, you're going to have fewer payments that you can do. So, if you, like if for Spring, your charges were posted in December, and if you set up your payment plan in December, you could have five months to pay your Housing charges. If you wait until your due date of February, you only have three or two and a half. So, the earlier you start doing your financials, the better it is for you to be able to make your payments and make it easier.

**Korede:** Our first question for Vickie is, “What steps are being taken to ensure diverse and inclusive meal options for students with dietary restrictions or preferences, such as vegetarian, vegan, or allergen-free choices?”

**Vickie:** Thank you so much for that question. We do understand here at Dining Hall that everybody has that, that everybody has their own preference when it comes to food. And food is a very personal thing for everyone. With that being said, in regards of dietary restrictions or preference, we actually do have, I'm just going to go one by one, for the vegetarian and vegan, we do have all those actually daily at Rooted station. That is for those who particularly don't eat

any animal products. And if anything is in there that specifically (...) they're going to go ahead and label those out for us. For those that have certain dietary needs or restrictions like major allergens, if anything that is in that dish on that day or anything that we serve in the Dining Hall, we're going to have that specific signage there, letting everybody know that this one contains shellfish, this one contains nuts and whatnot.

And then also we do, our team also train and certify to assist any students with specific dietary restriction. If you are not sure at all what has been served there, we're just going to go ahead and encourage everyone to flag someone down and ask, is there anything that contains things that you cannot have or consume. That will be the best route to go. Sometimes, you know, I do understand that they're missing the sign and whatnot. If you really have that very specific dietary restriction, please go ahead and let us know, and they're going to go ahead and find out for you. And, if you have any needs or any dietary, let's just say I don't like any tomato on my sandwich. My staff and our lovely culinary team will be able to go ahead and whip out something for you guys. That if we have everything on hand, if we able to, we will do that. But you know, it just depends on the conversation that we have before and what not. I would highly recommend anyone that has a very specific dietary need, come and talk to me. I will walk around the Dining Hall all the time, so stop me by and then we can go through all the menu lists and everything that we have, and we can accommodate your needs specifically for you.

In general, it would be vegan, non-vegan, major allergen, but if you have anything specifically that you cannot have, come see me and I'll go ahead and go through everything and make sure that I'll talk to Chef<sup>5</sup>, and we'll see how it goes, and we'll reach out to you personally on that one.

**Madi:** Alright. “How often is the dining hall menu updated or rotated to keep options fresh and engaging?”

**Vickie:** Thank you so much, Madi. We plan, we have multiple planning sessions that do for our culinary team, and I usually just jump in and then sit down with them as well. We have the whole semester planning that will fit into each week and whatnot, and we have the meeting culinary team that will go ahead and have the meeting, see what is in season right now, what is the best available and tastes the best. They're going to go ahead and adjust it accordingly. It can go to daily if things that we order do not come in. Those can change.

I will go back to, I think I saw someone brought it up to my attention that the menu<sub>10</sub> is not really what was published before. That could be multiple things. One of the things that I know is common is when we order something from our food distributor. Unfortunately, those cannot come in and now we have to do last minute adjustment. That will be the reason why it would not fit or match what we publish on Monday regarding the whole week of the menu.

<sup>5</sup> Chef Willie Newsome, whose profile can be found in the “Cameos” section (page 7).

**Korede:** Our first question for Christopher is “Are there any plans to extend dining hall hours to better accommodate students with late classes or extracurricular activities?”

**Chris:** Yeah, we fully understand the student body is very busy and want to, you know, different parts of the day as well, even though our hours of operation are really designed for the majority of students, we're always evaluating, especially being, you know, what does the data tell us on? And we can all, we're always going to be in that evaluation period, especially from semester to semester and year to year. It's something that we can evaluate and have the discussion with the Housing and Residential team as we move forward with that. It's always, it's never off the table, but it's always a conversation that we can have semester to semester and however we evaluate and limiting that process.

**Madi:** Thank you. Alright. “Are there plans to source more ingredients locally or offer organic and eco-friendly meal options?”

**Chris:** With Chartwells and Compass Group<sup>11</sup>, it's a very, one good thing we have our food purveyor which really sources everything. It's national wide where it's segmented regionally. Especially for our location, they ensure that there's (...) local produce, bread producers, and one of our main vendors, for example, Sysco<sup>12</sup>, tries to secure things as local as possible and other variations of that. So, it's more local than, I would say, five years ago, ten years ago in our type of environment. We try to source as local as possible. And it's easier to obtain. And, in certain circumstances, like when we go through a shortage of supplies, especially the (...) food that's going around, especially egg-based dishes and things like that. We try to source certain things and try to pivot as much as we can. But of course, like I have said previously, we source everything, especially getting feedback as well from the student body and the university as well.

**Korede:** Our first question for Rene is “What factors determine room assignments, and how does the process ensure fairness for all students?”

**Rene:** Yes, thank you. So, first and foremost, what determines a housing assignment is the application date. So, we always encourage students to apply early because students are assigned on a first-come, first served basis. Then after, I will assign students based on their gender specific floor that they'd like to be on.

In my experience, this has been one of the topics that's created the most questions, or students wanting to move because they've been placed on the COED floor. So, I try to make it a point to assign those students that want to be on a gender-specific floor to avoid that and having them move on move-in day. So, after, you know, on their gender preferences, wherever they would like to live, I do assign based on community.

Then after that, roommates do take, the roommate system does take precedence in this case as well. So, there are a lot of different factors that impact how students are assigned to bedrooms. If students have a roommate, that can also change the dynamic. So, if one student wants to be on a gender-specific floor and the other one does not, who takes priority there, right? So, in this case, I do, based on my criteria of what I get assigned first, I do go with the one that wants to be on gender specific floor. And down the lines, students are not happy where they're placed. We do have the room change process, and students are able to change floors or buildings if they're not happy where they're living.

**Madi:** Alright, now you mentioned the communities earlier. “How does the housing assignment process accommodate students with specific preferences, e.g. single room, quiet floors, themed housing?”

**Rene:** Yes, so typically as far as single rooms are concerned, typically we don't assign students to single bedrooms. These rooms are usually held for students with disabilities. Now, I know this year due to the availability of rooms, we did offer single rooms to the South Village residents. So, this was a change from previous years. So, students were able to pick that this year.

As far as communities, we do have three special [Living Learning] Communities<sup>13</sup>. So, we have the Nuestra Casa floor, the Gender Inclusive floor, as well as the Halisi floor. And this is an application process. So, once the application is submitted, we will review the responses and based on how those questions are answered, we will determine if you are fit for that community. In addition, there are several other communities that we look into, such as the Do Not Disturb Community, Engineering and Technology floor. So those types of floors are a little easier to assign to. But those three communities that I mentioned previously are the ones that we look into more and there is a question to follow up that is attached to that.

**Korede:** Our first question for Laura is “What strategies does Business Operations have to ensure students' health and safety are prioritized during operational decisions?”

**Laura:** I think collaborative decision making is probably my primary strategy. I'll be working very closely with the three Associate Directors in our department, of course, (...) the Associate Director of Residence Life, Associate Director of Facilities, and myself are going to be working very closely to make decisions on this health and safety. I will then be working outside of our department with the [Student] Health Center<sup>14</sup>, Public Safety<sup>15</sup>, and I'm getting to know the other departments here upstairs (...) and building good relationships with them in order to make good decisions for our internal business operations that then benefits the entire residence population. I will have some input on the student guide and on the license agreement that will touch on these two topics of health and safety.

**Madi:** All right, and then you mentioned other departments. “In what ways does Business Operations collaborate with those other departments to ensure that financial and operational decisions reflect student interests and concerns?”

**Laura:** Yeah, well that's our primary goal here, right, is to make the right decisions and the best decisions for the interest of the students. And so, I kind of, for lack of a better word, love to bug other departments outside of my own department, but in a very strategic way where I build strong relationships. Even if there's not a current topic, a discussion between myself and other central departments, I still connect with them regularly. So, when it is something important that we want to bring to the table and get some support, they'll know my name well and they'll be more likely to respond. So, we really need strong relationships. And we're a fairly new group, a young group in the Housing as far as staff goes. And so, we're presenting ourselves very well with other departments that brings good collaborative decision making will benefit the students in general. But I'm going to be out there constantly working with Financial Aid, with the Dean's Office, the Business Financial Central Offices<sup>16</sup>, to better represent our department and you as well.



**Student Submitted  
Questions**

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## Student Submitted Questions

**Alyssa:** Thank you guys so much for answering those, we are going to move into some more of the student questions that were submitted and for these they're all kind of mixed up so whoever has an answer (...). The first question that we have is "What exactly is the declining balance and what is it for?"

**Lori:** The declining balance is pretty much cash on your [Student] ID card. You can use the declining balance anywhere down in Housing, either in the Market or in the Dining Hall.

**Jason:** Okay, next question we have is, "Are there plans to extend dinner hours for students that get out of class at 8:45PM?"

**Vickie:** We close at 10 PM from Monday through Thursday, only Friday that we actually close at eight o'clock. But I believe that to further clarify that point, if we're talking about hotline food, those are going to be broken down since the dinner hours are from 5 to 8 PM. That is when the hot food is broken down from Monday through Thursday, we try to keep it there a little bit longer but the hours for dinner are from 5 to 8 PM. Those are the hours for the hot line. However, after 8 p.m. we still have the Grill which is grilled to order those you guys can go ahead and order anything that you like that on the Grill. Burger, quesadilla, and we also have pizza that is available for everybody as well up until 10 PM.

**Alyssa:** Thank you. Another one we have is "Will housing prices go up next year?"

**Luis:** So, the answer is yes. It's not prices that are set by our team. These are prices that are passed on to us. We confirm and we collaborate with all the offices upstairs to make sure that they get all the approval. But the answer, the short answer is yes. I think that right now, next year, then if I'm not mistaken the number is I think 6%. So, which is a pretty, I guess significant increase based on normal common numbers. I think the index usually is represented by 2.3, 2.5% year after year after year. That's the normal rotation. And an increase hasn't happened, so I think the college is trying to catch up. And so, you can expect to see that increase coming next year. You know, until everything is signed and approved, nothing is official. But once it is, the information will come out.

**Jason:** Next question. “Recently there was an incident with an individual entering the towers. How will you prevent things like this from happening going forward?”

**Luis:** You know, that's a great question. To be very honest and sincere with you all, that's the kind of stuff that keeps me up at night. You know, this is the first institution in my, I'm going to age myself, but this is my 26th year working in Housing and Residence Life. I've had the opportunity to work at some amazing institutions throughout my career. This is the first time that I have worked at a university that has no security at the front desk.

So, for some folks that may be great. There are no rules when it comes to visitation. You know, anybody can visit me if they get approval from my roommate or as long as everybody's okay, people can come in and whatnot, right? But there's a danger in that. There's a serious danger in that, right? Number one is quality of life because maybe you have a roommate or a friend that doesn't care to tell you, that bothers me, I pay to live with you and it's just you and me or if it's a triple, you and John and I, right, we three of us live together, but I'm having to share the space with five people because there's two people visiting all the time, right? And so, the person may not be willing to tell you something, but they're uncomfortable. And on top of that, it's the fact that incidents like, you know, what you just mentioned, take place where random strangers walk around, you know, asking folks if they want to make some money. And it's just scary to think that anybody could just get in and walk around.

In fact, I was giving a tour to our Vice President<sup>17</sup> and our CFO<sup>18</sup>, and in the process, I found an ID on the floor on the elevator. It just happened to be, we were here, we were talking about one of my major concerns, which is security, and I happened to find an ID right by the elevator, and I said, “oh, look at this,” and I used it to tap in, I pressed all the buttons until I found out which floor it was good for. I pressed the button; we went up and walked around the whole floor and the lounge and went through the back and out the staircase just like that.

And I have to say again, I think that there are students who are going to be very upset once security measures begin to take place. I've been there, I've seen it, I've been at other institutions where (...) we're in a prison, we want to have people come in, we don't want to have these restrictions. But the reality is, again, that it's a safety measure that is there for your benefit. The same thing happens if, know, God forbid, we had a fire or something like that happened and we had no idea who's in the building, right? Yeah, there's a feature of tapping in, but you don't tap out, right?

For that reason, it's one of my focuses. The challenge is that, again, having a post for security in every tower is a major expense. It's really a major expense. And it will, again, induce an increase on that fee, or it would require that something else gets dropped for us to be able to provide that level of security.

So, I'm thinking about it from the first day. Since the day I interviewed here, I've been thinking about, you know, how can I tackle this issue? So, I'm in the process. We are trying to define what our tap system is capable of doing. You know, it's something that I hope to have a concrete answer by the start of next semester. But it's a costly upgrade, so I'm not sure whether we'll have, you know, the means to be able to put in place as quickly as I would like to see it.

**Elba:** I think that there's one additional thing that I wanted to add in terms of, we, as folks mentioned, as to when they introduced themselves, right, like our leadership team is really working towards implementing some of these things, some of these processes in place, some of these things in place. But I also want to highlight the, one of the important responsibilities of communal living right and I think that it's so critical, particularly in these situations where folks share a space right that residents take an active role as members of this community right and so that information is shared with folks through like their welcome meetings, their first meetings when they come in, it's shared through RAs, right? Like we have RAs that are in the lobbies of the buildings that are supporting with some of the stuff that you just mentioned. We have RAs doing rounds every night to early hours of the morning to support that.

And we also have to recognize that in that there's limits, right? Because we're not always in every place 24-7. And so that is why there's so much power too in communal living. And residents will be also taking an active role, right? We have some folks that are good about reporting up, right? Like you call the RA and say, hey, this is going on. When a certain situation is happening, folks are like, hey, we just want to let you know this is happening or reporting to or reporting directly to Public Safety and we work closely with Public Safety where a professional staff and Public Safety will show up to incidents that are reported.

So, I just want to make sure to clarify that because I don't want the concept to be like, well we don't have that, so things are going to continue happening, right? Like this is a typical conversation in all institutions, right, across residence like apartments, but it's also important that residents take responsibility for the space that they're living in, right? If I see something that's not okay, then this is why there's things in place, right? This is where there's processes in place, there's staff in place to support them with that, but we need folks to take an active role in that and participate, right? This one's out of place, this doesn't feel right, right?

This is also why we send out communication to residents reminding them, if you're going in and you see someone's just chilling outside, don't allow them to come in behind you, right? Don't tap them in for something, allow them to do that. And I know sometimes that can be challenging because you don't want to create this environment of like, aw man this person is rude, but it's really for your safety, right? We talk about this, we bring this up. We really want to make sure that folks like, feel the power to say like, do you live here? I don't know that you live here. I haven't seen you, right? Like, because everybody is part of this community and for this

community to really thrive, we need folks to take an active role. That's not to say don't put yourself in front of any danger or anything like that. It's just to say that you are a part of the environment that we create. So, I just wanted to add that.

**Luis:** Yeah, actually, I appreciate Elba for saying that. The idea is to create a culture of accountability where we are all looking out for each other. I think that's incredibly important. We'll do our part to try to make sure the safety and security of our community. But we do this together, right? It's got to be a combo thing. So, I appreciate Elba for mentioning that because it's a, you know, even if we had high levels of security, if the community is also not participating in it, it would only go so far. Thank you.

**Alyssa:** Thank you both. This question we did get submitted a couple of times by some students, so it is specific to Dining. “Will there be any updates/additional equipment added in the Dining Hall, like an ice cream machine or panini press?”

**Vickie:** Yes. Okay, just to get and give you all an update on that, we actually, as we mentioned before, we constantly seek for any feedback or anything that might be an exciting things that you all as a resident would like to see and I highly recommend you guys give us the feedback, drop by, email us, whatnot. We see everything, and we put that into our weekly agenda that we talk among the management team of Dining Hall to see what we can do and what we can source and whatnot.

So, with that being said, the panini press is coming. We're waiting for that to come in and we're going to install it. We're just working out a little kink on the procedure regarding the cleaning and whatnot. But it's here. It's in front of my office and it's ready to go. We have to finalize a little bit of the procedure that we need to do. We heard all the comments. I just want to be more, I want to say one more time that we hear all the feedback, and we try our best to accommodate anything that we could. As far as ice cream goes, we actually, the ice cream machine is still in the talk. We're waiting out any option, anything that might be because it's not one and done. We have to make sure that we have all the procedure, know, food safety, how to ensure that, how to resource the right flavor that you all might enjoy. know, people might enjoy chocolate more than vanilla and whatnot. So those are what is in the talk.

However, Chef Willie, you all might know him. He's our Executive Chef. He is going to be implementing Ice Cream Friday every Friday. So those have been out there. It might not be announced as much, but every Friday we try to accommodate those. You know, have a little ice cream night or things like that fun and exciting things that just change it up, you know, rather

just cookies. I can't eat cookies every day as well. So, I hear you all. I hear you all. Yes, that will be an update from us. Yes.

**Jason:** There have been several ongoing and widespread issues affecting the GEA<sub>19</sub> apartment (...). For example, I have a few outstanding work orders. Some submitted months ago (...). "What can you share here to address the backlog of work orders that are affecting the (...) functionality of housing?"

**Luis:** So, we're working diligently on trying to address some of the issues, especially over at GEA. It is not the only place that has issues. It's sad to say that issues are all around the campus. But GEA, you know, being that it's independent and being that it's a little bit offsite, has been experiencing some issues that have taken a bit longer to address. Now, I'm happy to say that we are back in trying to address some of those major issues. Issues that come in, I think it's important for everybody to understand, issues that come to us are taken by priority. And so, if there are bigger ticket items, such as water leaks or ceiling leaks or lack of hot water, things like that, those obviously always take priority. But unless I know the specifics of what type of work order it is, it's hard to pinpoint. What I can say is that if there's anybody that has an outstanding work order to please email us. Just email us and we will refresh.

The last thing I'll say about that is that over the past three months if I'm not mistaken, we have lost two of our Maintenance Mechanics. So, where we had five when I first started, we are down to three. We've put in all the paperwork to hire some new folks. One of them is starting soon. The other one's going to take at least another month, month and a half if I'm lucky, but the three folks that we have on staff have been, you know, super diligent in trying to take care of the major issues. So, I appreciate everybody's patience in getting these things resolved.

But again, if there are anything that any student feels has taken far too long, please email us<sup>6</sup>. It'll move it to the top of the list, and we'll try to take care of it as soon as possible. Please note, it also gets a super large volume of emails, but I certainly respect and understand.

**Alyssa:** Thank you. Another issue or question that kept coming up in the form "Can conference room hours get extended for students to study when their study lounges are taken?"

**Luis:** That's a toughie, I'm not sure that I know.

**Elba:** This is Meghan<sup>7</sup> our Assistant Director for Residence Life.

<sup>6</sup> [askhousing@calstatela.edu](mailto:askhousing@calstatela.edu)

<sup>7</sup> Meghan Eagen, whose profile can be found in the "Cameos" section (page 7).

**Meghan:** Hello. So right now, the closure of the conference rooms is tied to RA rounds. So that's why they close when they do. That's just to make sure that everything's okay before everybody is more or less in bed for the evening. It's certainly a conversation management can have, because I know it's come up before. But just to provide the logic right now, community kitchen, conference rooms, study rooms, et cetera, assuming we're specifically talking about the Learning Center, those are tied with when RAs Conduct their rounds, so that's why they close when they do.

**Jason:** “What are the current priorities for maintenance and facility improvements?”

**Luis:** So, one of the, well there's several. Right now, my number one priority is trying to get the roofs over on the West Side of Phase One<sup>20</sup> [Apartments] done. They are, they're old and so they need some TLC So we're planning on working on those. We're also in the process of securing tap card access for the apartments and GEA. So, as you know, those dog tags, keys that we have [for the apartments], they don't even make those anymore. But it is a significant financial commitment. We are close to getting that done. So, we are hopeful that by the start of next semester, all our units will have tap access and that will eliminate the problem of people getting locked out because those dog tags you know get demagnetized and whatnot. So those are the two biggest things.

If I was to say third and fourth would be the fact that we have a decent number of hot water heaters that have been falling apart. And so, we've been trying to get those fixed slowly, maturely. And the same thing with AC units. And so, I just, this week we just signed a maintenance agreement for AC and heating units. So, you guys are going to see a crew walking by, you know, just offering maintenance to all our AC and maintenance, the air conditioning units that we have. So those are at least the top four things that we are working on. I'm sure that there will be a list of others when we're going back to fine tuning landscaping. And you guys know that in the apartments we have a gopher issue and things like that, that really require a little bit of attention.

**Alyssa:** Thank you. So now, “Are there specific accommodations for students who apply late [to Housing] due to extenuating circumstances?”

**Luis:** Yeah, we have an ongoing acceptance, we offer housing as needed. Traditionally, it's great if students come in at the beginning of the semester because it allows us to be able to sort the rooms accordingly, but we certainly accommodate throughout the year. We understand the circumstances change for students, and so, you know, we're happy to prorate<sup>8</sup> any license

<sup>8</sup> “to divide, distribute, or assess proportionately” – Merriam-Webster Dictionary

agreement that may come. And so, we encourage students to just sign up whenever it works for them.

**Jason:** “What inspires the dishes Dining makes?”

**Vickie:** Thank you so much for the question. So, we have meetings before the semester starts; you know, the culinary team, Executive Chef, has the template. However, what inspires will be the availability of the ingredients that we have at the time locally. We're trying to do that locally. And what the feedback that, you know, students send it in, and you know, what you like and what you all don't like. Chef is always there on the floor and I'm trying to be out there as well. And if you all see me, come say hi. Let me know what you like, what you don't like. That way we can incorporate those. Like we mentioned before, the menu we actually plan. We have a draft. We publish it every week. However, it depends on the availability of the ingredients. Like Chris mentioned before, right now the shortage of eggs requires pivoting and making sure that we offer a nutrition menu while not really, while we're not able to get the protein source from egg, we have to supplement with something else. There will be examples of what inspired us, one of them will be the shortage or availability and whatnot.

And with that being said, the feedback is the most important thing that we are taking into consideration. We see everything every day. From limit this type of protein, we want more of this, more of that. We try to accommodate everyone according to their needs and what fits in our menu planning. With that being said, if you would like to see, we will try to bring more different cuisine there. Like myself, I'm Thai, so I'm trying to push more of Thai cuisine on the menu. If that is something to see whether the students will have good feedback on that or not. Just, you know, something different, maybe once a week that we will do on that part. That would be our question. That's the answer. Thank you.

**Alyssa:** Next question. “Is there any support for undocumented students and / or people who know undocumented students?”

**Elba:** So, support for undocumented students. So, I'm part of the Dreamers Task Force on campus. So, we work with the Dreamers Resource Center<sup>21</sup> specifically to ensure that we are connecting with the Dreamers Resource Center to talk about the needs of our undocumented students here on campus and how we can support them in Housing. So, I'm part of specifically the subcommittee for Outreach and Recruitment of undocumented students and to be able to connect them to resources. So, for example, one of the things that we were working closely with them is to advertise the opportunity of an RA to the Dreamer Center so they can share it with



undocumented students. The RA position is a volunteer position, so therefore undocumented students can be part of that opportunity. So really finding ways that we can ensure that we are providing other opportunities considering that not every student assistant opportunity is open to undocumented students.

Additionally, I would say we're also finding ways and having conversations within staff meetings to really think about how we can proactively create space, so it becomes a welcoming and inclusive community for all students. So really thinking about how our marketing material looks like, what information do we have out here. I know that on campus we're sharing a lot of resources, whether it was a red card<sup>22</sup>, whether it was other resources that they printed out, and so for us to really put them out proactively whether it's in our office spaces, whether it's sharing them throughout the newsletter and really ensuring that we're taking a proactive approach versus a reactive approach waiting for students to feel the need to share their identity with us but for them to really understand that we are creating a community inclusive of everybody.

We also want to have conversations with folks that might be interested in bringing up resources. I know we have some folks that are very invested in committing and bringing these conversations to the forefront. So really thinking about how do we incorporate the information that they're sharing with us to ensure that we're also included in all our outreach to share with different, with folks generally, right? We're not, this information is shared generally. We just want to make sure that everybody is familiar. So, whether you're undocumented or not, it's super important for folks to be aware of the resources because even if you're not, you might know someone that's impacted and that might need these resources. And so, it's always important for us to be aware of the resources.

**Jason:** “Are there any specific resources or programs available for low-income first-generation or international students in residential housing?”

**Elba:** I think one of the things to consider is that we collectively serve a population that is primarily first gen low-income students. And so, I think that the collectively as an institution, most of our resources cater to the student population generally, right, that we serve. I think a lot of the resources that we talked about today are things that we will generally connect folks to in terms of like if they're low income, basic needs opportunity, the Dean of Students, Academic Advising<sup>23</sup>. First, you know, the same thing, we serve first-gen students, right? So, we really try to incorporate that into our conversations as well as we're connecting with folks. There's a lot of folks in our team specifically also that are first-gen, and I think that also serves as a great resource. I identify as a first-gen person, Luis is a first-gen person, so those are also great resources to have to be able to connect with folks and share our experience.

I'm also a Cal State LA alumni, so I was here and so I've served as a student assistant here in different opportunities across departments and so I think having those perspectives is also helpful to be able to provide some conversation with folks.

**Luis:** And I want to say also, mental health and wellness are very important. I remember, for me as a first-generation college student, the pressure that I was feeling and how to manage that stress was important. So, CAPS<sup>24</sup> is there as well. So that's another resource that I think students should really take advantage of.

**Alyssa:** Thank you. And with that topic, we got a question. "Are there any mental health oriented events coming this year?"

**Luis:** We don't have the CAPS person [Liz Mendez<sup>9</sup>] here. It would have been great to have invited her to come and participate. Or perhaps, you know, even Osmara, Director of CAPS. I'm sure that if we had invited her, she would have loved to have been here. We understand that there is a need for that, that type of programming. And I think that it'd be great for us to have an opportunity to share that it came up in question and that we should certainly put it on the map and consider it.

**Elba:** So, I do want to highlight, so folks might know we have a CAPS counselor that comes to Housing Mondays and Thursdays specifically here in Housing to support residents. Monday, she has drop-in hours. Her office is right across from the Housing Administration Office in the other Residence Office. (...) I do want to highlight her flyer might be right there in between those poles getting closer to the restroom. Liz does facilitate events here once a month on a Thursday. That information is there, sent out through the newsletter. I also believe it is in our Instagram, and she creates spaces here for mental health conversations in addition to arts and crafts sessions. They're held here in this room [SV MPR]. They're facilitated by her and another crafts individual. Last semester they had it during the day. They realized that that wasn't a time that was very popular. So, this semester they changed it to the evenings on Thursdays. I'm hoping that more folks are going to share. So, if folks haven't shared that, I felt having stuff like that, I would highly encourage individuals to do so. Housing and Residence Life also participates in, and I might need your help on this Meghan.

**Meghan:** Typically, once a semester there's a campus-wide wellness initiative that occurs and basically what that comes down to is every department hosting some sort of wellness-themed

<sup>9</sup> Liz Mendez, whose profile can be found in the "Cameos" section (page 7).

program. Whether it's around mental health, physical health, environmental health, or what have you. And on that note, I'll also share if you are not a regular attendee of your RA's programs, their entire programming model is built around the elements of wellness. So, they often have programs around mental health, wellness, physical wellness, environmental wellness, et cetera, et cetera, there's like seven. That's intentional. So, if you are, again, if you're not a regular attendee of your RA's programs, I would recommend checking them out. They were hard on me.

**Jason:** Thank you so much. This next question is focused on student safety. “What does housing do to keep residents safe from coyotes<sup>25</sup>?”

**Luis:** I got a chance to see them the other day walking by with a little baby. Yeah, great question. I think it's one of those things where you really have to be attentive. It is a Southern California situation. They are protected too. In many ways, yeah, we don't want them here, but this [land] is theirs, you know? So, we just have to be very mindful. And if anybody runs into any issues whatsoever, certainly call UPD<sup>10</sup>. They'll come and they'll escort to help out.

**Elba:** And I'm not like a wildlife expert so just disclaimer, but I will say that in my experience, coyotes don't really, particularly coyotes in the wild, don't typically come to folks, right? They're not like dogs or they're not going to be like, hey, what's going on. They're not going to try to attack you. They typically try to attack things that are smaller than them. That's why they go after smaller dogs, that's why they might go after cats or there might be rabbits around, that kind of situation. But if you're just walking, they're more likely than not just going to continue on their way. So just avoid contact with them, don't try to engage with them, don't try to give them food, anything like that. Just let them live their life, you live yours, and we're going to get through it together.

**Alyssa:** “Are there any improvements or changes being made to the housing assignment process?”

**Rene:** Yeah, are there any improvements in particular you had a question about?

**Alyssa:** Not in particular, just improvements or changes for next year.

<sup>10</sup> University Police Department, a division of University Public Safety.

**Rene:** Okay, so for this coming year, we are planning to potentially offer students the ability to pick their own bedroom. It will be a big undertaking, so I'm hoping to launch that as soon as possible. Right now, what takes precedence is just the launching of the application along with the roommate group process, but we're hoping to launch that this year.

**Luis:** And there's a lot of details associated with that. It's again, as Rene mentioned, it's a big undertaking. It will be fun to have a window of time for you to go online and select your own room. But yeah, there'll be a lot more information coming (...).

**Jason:** “Would it be possible to suggest certain snacks or drinks for the market?”

**Vickie:** Yes, absolutely. There are multiple ways that you can send us feedback. The most effective, the most convenient one would be just, “Hey Vickie, how are you? I like this.” Let me know whether you can get it there or not. Or Jen<sup>11</sup> right over there would be able to relay the message to us. Even Chris, say “Hi Chris, I like this. Please let Vickie know.” We always talk.

However, we do have a phone number<sup>12</sup> right there that you can text us that, you know, hey, this is what I like and what I prefer to have. We are working to get more protein-based or higher protein content snacks that seem to be very popular among students. That is what we're looking into right now. If you all like to and we be able to source it in time, we will be more than happy to bring those in and make sure that you all come into the market and get what you need. That's my main goal.

So just to give you all the insight. We would love to get anything that you all, that you suggested. But however, we have to go through our corporate ordering platform if to put it, you know very simply, if it's available on those platforms we'd be able to get those for y'all. But if it's not, say that you know someone like Pepsi, we cannot get that here because we are Coke property over here. Just to give you all an example, if anything, you can go ahead and give us, you know, the list of names. I can quickly check that real quick, see the turnaround, see what we have out there that kind of comparable to that, we'll get it rolling, but only if it's available on the platform that we can order. Yes.

**Alyssa:** “How can students provide feedback or voice concerns about housing policies and services?”

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer ‘Jen’ Jimenez, whose profile can be found in the “Cameos” section (page 7).

<sup>12</sup> (323) 997-4656

**Luis:** So, how can students offer feedback on housing policies. And I think that, I guess, the best way to go about it right now, we started last year by providing an assessment tool. That assessment tool went out. I think we had a great response to it. We've analyzed the numbers. We are meeting as a team to try to address a lot of the issues. You know, unfortunately, we can't tackle everything, but we are trying our best to figure out, you know, the larger number of issues, the ones that get the most support in trying to address those. But I would say that another way to go about it is by contacting us. All our information is available on the [Housing] website<sup>26</sup>. You can certainly reach out to any of us and share concerns and updates and things that you want us to know about and be aware of.

**Jason:** “Would you be able to have microwaves at the bottom of each tower or outside for students to make food after 10PM?”

**Luis:** Well, I would have to check. The voltage on the microwave is what keeps this place from being able to have those micro fridge and micro fridge combos is because we don't necessarily have the wattage sufficient for everybody having one. But it's something that I would certainly take into consideration. Perhaps we can extend some of the community hours, the community kitchen hours. I'll take that into consideration for sure.

**Alyssa:** “What methods are used to prevent cross-contamination in the Dining Hall?”

**Chris:** Our team, our culinary team, our front of the house team, and our market team, there is a safety program that's used through Chartwells just to make sure everything is following protocol. We do daily checks in every station in every location just to make sure that it is followed by protocol. And our management supervisors do walk-throughs and checks throughout the day and every day of the week.

**Open Mic &  
Instagram Live  
Questions**

*Pages 38 - 43*

## Open Mic & Instagram Live Questions

**Student:** “Some showers in my dorm have had mold since before we arrived last semester. What can you do to change that?”

**Luis:** In order for us to consider it mold, we have to have a company come in and test it and make sure that it is actual mold and not just soap scum. You know, just the buildup of, you know, I don't know if you guys regularly clean it, but if you're regularly cleaning the shower and you're seeing spots come up, then we would certainly like to know that so we can send our company to come in and do a thorough test and be able to treat it, or if necessary assign you to a different room and move you guys to a different space. But if you're, you know, again the idea is to first determine if it's actually mold or if it's soap scum. It still depends on how often are you guys you know cleaning it and making sure that it is possible.

**Student:** (...).

**Luis:** It depends if the room is occupied. If you guys are staying there during the semester, it is your responsibility.

**Student:** It was like that before we arrived last semester.

**Luis:** Okay, so we can certainly look deeper into that issue, because I want to make sure that I understand exactly when this issue first began. So, if it was before you moved in, then I want to know if there was somebody that was staying there over the break. And that could have been the reason. If the room is empty for any period of time, our cleaning company goes in and cleans everything before students move back in. So, it all depends on whether it was fully vacant or if there was somebody there living during that time. But we can certainly talk more about it. Come see me after and we can chat.

**RA Valentino:** Hi! Elba, I promise I'll do rounds right after this. Hi, my name is Valentino and I'm an RA. I asked a question about the panini press earlier and I heard it got

answered and we're bringing it back. Very cool. But I had another question about sandwiches. "Is it possible to keep the sandwich bar open on the weekends?"

**Vickie:** On the weekend, we can certainly look into that. However, if anything, the whole bar might not be possible because of, you know, the amount of looking at the data, how many people visiting, and those might, if it's on there, my train of thought would be not so many people eating that. Those will go to waste. So that's one of the reasons. However, we can look into that to see whether we can condense it on the other side. It might not be the wide variety of salad that we have. Is that your dietary concern that you have?

**RA Valentino:** No, I just want my sandwich.

**Vickie:** Okay. So, you just like your sandwich. We'll look into that. Yeah, a lot of it's just based on usage. And if we get to periods of time, it's not being used, then that's probably a big majority of it. We basically look at the data. How many times have you been using things like that? What kind of sandwich do you like?

**RA Valentino:** It's got bread and something in the middle, that's a sandwich<sup>13</sup>.

**Vickie:** Thank you. We do have; you can order at the Grill station. We have chicken sandwiches and fried chicken sandwiches. Sometimes we have something fun right there. We not only have burger or quesadilla, but you can also order sandwiches as well over there.

**RA Valentino:** I'm talking more about like with like the deli meats, such as ham or turkey. I understand it's a, (...).

**Vickie:** The sandwich, we can do some kind of pre-made and whatnot, but I do want to if you like sandwich, I'll see what we can do on that one. Thank you. Thank you for the feedback.

**RA Valentino:** I'm going to go do my rounds now, thank you.

<sup>13</sup> "two or more slices of bread or a split roll having a filling in between" – Merriam-Webster Dictionary.



**Jason:** So, the question I have in mind is I've heard some universities offer residents the opportunity to take them on trips, activities, which are hosted by the (...). "Is there any way the (...) is going to be open to that?"

**Luis:** Yeah, there are other things that I think in terms of finances would take priority for me. And as I mentioned earlier, it's all based on funds. And I think that number one, the number one priority for me, is keeping up with the facility issues that we have and trying to figure out how do we, how do we zero that out. The second thing is how do we create some entertainment on campus here? And if I were to choose a third would be trying to figure out, how do we get a shuttle so that we can get you guys to move from here to the city and back, right?

You know, I think that if we were in a better space, I would love to be able to solidify the Living Learning Communities and offer good and structured Living Learning Communities that would put together these types of tours and trips. I think they are the best suited group to be able to put together trips and events like that. That's something that I have on my list of things to do. Yeah, and I think that they would be great to sponsor. We need to have faculty members that are willing to be part of the Living Learning Communities. And from there on, you can certainly figure out ways to make that happen. Also, things like RHA and ASI<sub>27</sub> and other programs, other groups that could potentially step in and take on some of these.

**Alyssa:** We did get a question on the Live. "Will residents have the option to choose their housemates for 2025-2026?"

**Luis:** So that's one of the things that Rene mentioned. We are hopeful to be able to have people self-select a room. And part of that is the ability to kind of team up with people and be able to select rooms together. It should be fun. I've seen it implemented in other places. Sometimes there's some hiccups, especially year one. But that will be an option. And hopefully it's something that will be a great benefit for the community.

**Alyssa:** Another question from the Live, we have "Can the hours for Dining be extended on the weekends and open on holidays?"

**Luis:** Vickie and Chris have touched on this a couple times, and I think that part of the deal is understanding that they are a business, right? And so, I think that they would love to be able to be in a place where the Dining Village is open 24 hours a day, right? They would love to be able to be in that position, but it requires constant participation. If we're only having five

people come in between, I don't know, 10 and 11 PM at night, it doesn't serve its purpose, it just falls apart. And there's a lot of food wasted in that process because a lot of the food is, you know, cooked. And so, I think that presents a challenge.

And so, as a team, by the way, I meet with Chartwells weekly, and we have a lot of these conversations. We're thinking about, you know, right now we've been discussing summer and times where we have conferences that are here and students who are here over the summer break, Housing is available during the summer and so we are thinking if X number of students come in, you know, how do we keep the Dining Village open? And so, you know, again, it's all based on whether we are getting the traffic to make that open space worth it? So that's, I guess, where we're at. I don't know if you guys [Vickie & Chris] want to add anything to that. I think it pretty much sums it up.

**Chris:** Yeah, it's really based on, like, as you said, you know, we would love to do certain things, but does it really, is the participation going to be there? If we do something and the participation is not there, then we may have to scale back. And that's something we have to reevaluate the data as it comes along.

**Alyssa:** Thank you both. We do have another question, it says “Will 23 and under students have to live in the South Village next year?”

**Luis:** That's a proposed idea of expanding the age limit here [South Village] up to 23. We would be dedicating space for them, so it's not going to be that they're going to be mixed in with the rest of the community. So, there would be dedicated space for them. I think the idea comes more from the fact that there have been students over the age of 21 who have come in and said, yeah, I'm not really happy in the apartments. I would love to have the opportunity to live in the towers.

And so why shouldn't they, right? If we have space available, they should certainly have the opportunity to live in South Village as well. And so, we are exploring with that idea. We, again, it's a matter of collecting data. We'll make it available. We're going to start with new incoming students, and we'll see how that goes. If that pans out well, then we will continue to explore and expand. And if it doesn't, then you know, we'll go back. The idea is here to be willing to give students what they want, where we are able to.

**Jason:** I have one more. “Why don't we have late night hours like orders like in CSU Fullerton?” Since they're at the same company.

**Chris:** It touches on a few of the topics we've talked about, and even though it's the same CSU, it's also a participation (...). Every campus has a different number of residents in the residence halls as well. There are several factors that go into that. So, each one is not a cookie cutter mode and how all that works. It's just that every campus is a little bit different.

**Alyssa:** "Are there any policy changes residents should be aware of?"

**Luis:** We are working right now on our new license agreement for next year. There are going to be some changes. For example, anything related to COVID is not there anymore. There are some restrictions that are being lifted when it comes to that. But I think overall a lot of the things are staying the same. I don't know what will end up coming of in terms of front desk security and perhaps visitation. So, there may be some changes associated with that. But I wouldn't know yet. I have to wait until we are done making all the necessary changes in order to be able to put anything out. There are some ideas, but again, nothing, in particular with security and visitation, nothing is concrete yet until we have the final go from the Vice President's office<sup>28</sup>.

**Miracle:** Thank you for that. "What goes into the pricing of meal plans?"

**Chris:** There are several things that go into that as well. Also, every university is a little bit different, but there's consumer price index, there's different factors of where we're at, and when it comes to price, there are different commodity products like proteins, beef, pork, eggs, things of that nature. Especially now we're going through something with Avian Influenza<sup>29</sup>, that's affecting availability as well. Every year there's a consumer price index really indicates where everything in the pricing of products across the country and how that kind of goes into the price effect on that.

**Miracle:** Okay, thank you. And "When will Summer 2025 [Housing] options be released?"

**Rene:** We plan to release that mid-March.

**Miracle:** Thank you. "Why can't students bring their own containers to the Dining Hall?"

**Chris:** That's really, we have the reusable container. It's a sanitation issue as well. Because we can't control what happens outside of the dining facility, we really try to control with a reasonable program so they can just change out that sanitized reusable container.

**Miracle:** "Are there any upcoming changes in leadership or structure within the housing department?"

**Luis:** Well, we have a new incoming Associate Director of Facilities. The person should be here early March. But again, you know there could be changes at any moment in time. I mean it depends on who stays and who goes. We also, we're also adding two new Residence Life Coordinators. They are going to be on board soon. So as far as changes in personnel, that's what we have right now. But again, it all depends on who goes and who stays.

**Alyssa:** "How do you ensure that resources, such as student housing and dining facilities, are effectively managed to meet growing student needs?"

**Luis:** Well, we consider every year challenges associated with student housing. I'm happy to say that I participate in several conferences throughout the year, trying to make sure that we stay ahead of the curve when it comes to addressing the student needs. So, we meet constantly. My team and I meet every week. We have a separation of our work priorities. So, we have our Facilities team. We have our Business Operation team. We have our Residence Life team. And we all come together also to make sure that we're taking the needs of the (...) and being able to put forth a good plan and good solutions for them.

Every year is different, every new student class is different, every incoming class has their own plus and minuses. And so, we do our best to try to take everybody into consideration. But I think most importantly something that Elba alluded to earlier is building cultures of accountability, making sure that people know where to get help and people know how to communicate and that the RAs are well trained and ready to be able to bring forth any challenges that are faced by students. The RAs play a very important role, they're the first line of contact, they are the people who see you at the lowest, they are the people who are there when you're at the highest, and they are the ones that can better gauge the temperature of everything that's going on. And so, we rely heavily on them to be able to share any challenges and any needs that our students and our community may be having. And from there, we try to do our best to address those needs.

**Closing Statements  
&  
Resource References**

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## Closing Statements

**Alyssa:** Well since we don't have any more questions on the Live or in person, thank you guys so much for coming and thank you for taking time out of your day to come. I hope that a lot of (...) were discussed. If there's anything you guys want to share about your departments as well (...).

**Luis:** I want to thank you for having us. I want to thank you for your willingness to ask questions. I know that oftentimes, you know, the perfect answer is not there. We are a work in progress. We are trying to do our best to make sure that we meet the needs, and we'll continue to do so day in, day out. We appreciate you guys being here, selecting Cal State LA and being part of this vibrant community. We will continue to work hard for you guys. And if there's anything that we can do, I encourage you to go and come by and visit us and say hello. And if you see us around, feel free to connect with us. So, thank you so much. We appreciate the opportunity, and we thank you for your time.

## Resource References

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5. [“I Have A Dream” Foundation](#)
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28. [Office of the President](#) – Resources and information related to each VP office provided
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