



RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION

## Co-ed Housing Proposal

The option of co-ed living was proposed to the Residence Hall Association the spring semester of 2008. It was during this time that the RHA held open forums, researched the policies of other Universities within the Big Ten, and began to survey the resident hall population. In response to the proposition and the resulting research, the Residence Hall Association would like to see Purdue University introduce the opportunity of co-ed housing to Purdue students in the new housing facility in order to produce a more mature atmosphere, encourage students who seek such an atmosphere to stay with University Residences, and to provide students with more options for living at Purdue University.

What the RHA is pursuing is for the new housing complex to become co-ed by hall when it opens in the fall of 2009. The \$52 million student housing complex consists of 365 single-student rooms with a private bath. The design of the facility will place 22 student rooms around a common living room space. Each cluster will have its own laundry room and place to study. Common living room will include a breakfast bar, a table, chairs and sofas, as well as a television. The RHA would like for the twenty-two room pod to be mixed gender, so that both men and women can live together and share the common living area. We believe that this proposal is within the sound judgment expressed by University staff, faculty, and professors as the personal living quarters will not be shared between genders. Not only is it within Purdue's sound judgment, but it is commonplace throughout the Big Ten Conference and the United States.

Indiana University, Ohio State University, and the University of Michigan were interviewed about their co-ed housing facilities. They were asked three questions: if their housing facilities were co-ed where both genders lived on the same floor, if security or community within the residence halls was affected by co-ed housing, and if any problems arose where students had a resident assistant of the opposite sex. Indiana University reported that all of their resident halls are co-ed by floor. Many of the halls have women and men live on separate ends of the halls, but there is no physical barrier between the men's side and the women's side. Additionally, Indiana University reports, "We do have an upper classmen building that allows men and women to live on the same hallway. The rooms are all singles with a shared private bathroom. Within the 'suite' folks must be of the same gender...but neighbors or the folks across the hall could be either gender. Students have to be 19 and have at least one year of residential living experience to get an assignment in this area (Ivey Lucas)." Furthermore, both Ohio State University and the University of Michigan have co-ed by floor resident halls as well, Norton House and Baites Hall respectively. Ohio State also added that there are no issues with cross-gender RAs and the University of Michigan stated that by having co-ed residence halls they "often see an increase in interaction and involvement." It is easy to see that co-ed living is a step forward and not a step backward (Turner, Griffin). None of the Universities interviewed had any negative comments to give

about co-ed housing. However, it is important that Purdue University not base their decision solely on what other Universities are doing, but base it on the thoughts and concerns of the student body.

In seeing the need for this fundamental truth, the RHA conducted a survey where two thousand randomly-selected residents received an electronic survey. Out of these two thousand students we received 300 responses – 149 females and 151 males. Our survey covered many of the essential questions that were raised when dealing with cross-gender housing. The first question asked, “Would you prefer to live on a floor where both females and males lived? An overwhelming 225 responded yes, while forty-nine responded no and twenty-five were undecided. Next, we asked if residents thought that the sense of community would increase, again an overwhelming 223 students responded saying that it

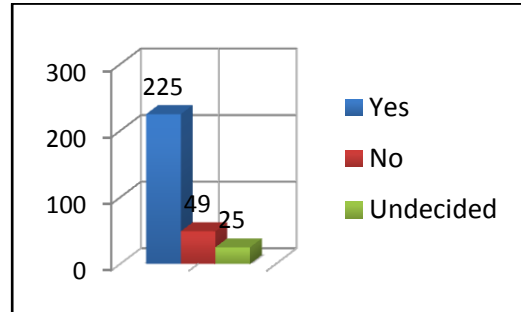


Figure: Would you want to live on co-ed floors?

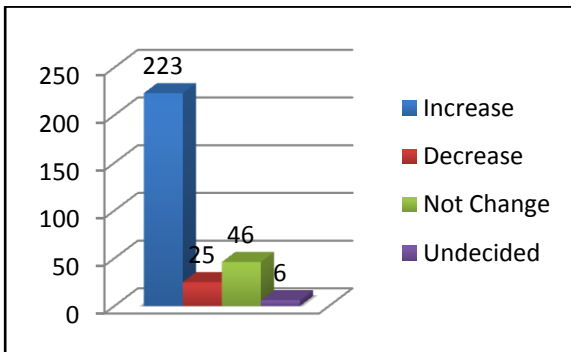


Figure: Would community increase?

would increase. Forty-six students, the next highest amount, said that community wouldn't change, only twenty-five said that it would decrease, and the final six students were undecided when they were questioned. The third question asked on the survey involved one of the most important topics to the RHA – security. We

asked if they felt if security within the halls would change. As you have already seen from other universities, there is either no correlation that can be made or like Indiana University described, security would increase. Students' responses were similar to the data collected from other universities. Ninety-nine students thought that

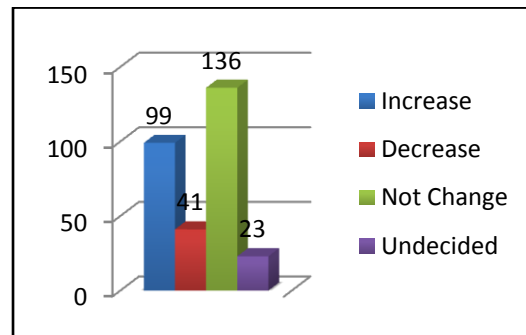


Figure: Would security increase or decrease?

security would increase as a result of co-ed housing, 136 students thought that it would not change, while only 41 students thought that security would decrease due to co-ed housing. The final twenty-three students chose undecided. Then we asked residents if their interaction with the resident assistant would change if they received an RA of the opposite sex. One-hundred ninety-three students responded saying that having an RA of the opposite sex would not affect their interaction while sixty-seven students said it would increase their interaction and forty students said that it would decrease their interaction. One of the goals for RHA for any given year is to promote the reapplication to University Residences. Therefore, we asked those surveyed whether or not they would be more likely to reapply to

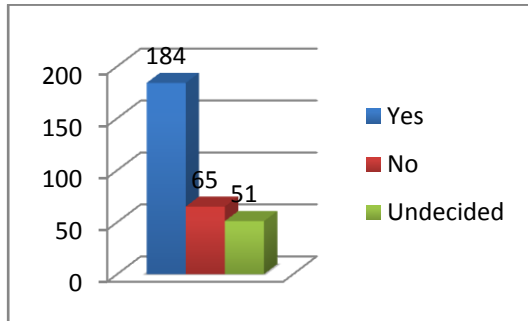


Figure: Would you be more likely to re-apply to UR?

University Residences if there was a co-ed by floor option. An impressive 184 students said that having a co-ed by floor option would increase their likeliness to reapply, fifty-one students were undecided, while only sixty-five students stated that it would not affect their decision to live on or off campus. Finally, we wanted a demographic of who we were polling. Since this survey was sent out randomly, we were not sure of the population answering, so we decided to ask them their classification here at Purdue University. One-hundred

seventy-one freshmen, eighty-eight sophomores, twenty-six juniors, and twelve seniors participated in the survey. This survey gives an accurate and statistically significant model for trend at Purdue University. To verify the statistics, the Residence Hall Association held a formal vote on whether or not the residence halls supported the co-ed housing proposal. A presentation was given, a question-answer session followed, and a week was given in order for the representatives of each hall to consult with their peers. The following week it was motioned to approve the proposal for co-ed housing by floor in the new housing complex and the motion passed unanimously; consequently, this proposal has the support of all thirteen halls represented by the Residence Hall Association.

It is the hope of the Residence Hall Association that the administration approves this proposal and co-ed floors are introduced to the new housing complex when it opens in the fall of 2009. While this proposal does not outline the possible prerequisites in order to be placed into the new hall, the RHA would not necessarily be opposed to such prerequisites if these prerequisites were implemented in order to augment community and safety. It is apparent that co-ed housing by floors is a great way to increase atmosphere, community, and possibly reapplication.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Wilson  
President

Sincerely,

Wil Hehman  
Director of Issues and Facilities

## Works Cited

Griffin, Patty. Phone interview. 8 September, 2008.

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