

Residence Life

Assessment of University Villages (UV) Tenant Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

An annual survey to assess the University Villages facilities and measure the efficacy of services and programs is critical to understanding the changing needs of student tenants. The results provide direction for continued improvement. A total of 108 residents completed the 2010-11 online survey. Results were mostly positive; respondents were largely satisfied with the environment and services of the UV. However, some respondents suggested improvements related to the accessibility of internet services, outdoor recreational activities for residents, communication with residents regarding Residence Life policies, in addition to existing concerns regarding the visibility and accessibility of community assistants, and UV policy enforcement.

BACKGROUND

University Villages was created to provide students and their families with comfortable, competitively priced housing. UV offers education services and programs tailored to single students and students with families. The goal of the UV community is to promote academic learning and the positive aspects of community. To promote choices essential to a successful college career, such as the fostering of interpersonal relationships and developing personal integrity, the unit implements a "Community Living Model" at University Villages. The Tenant Satisfaction Survey is designed to collect data that measures this program's success in regards to residents' interactions with staff and assistants, opinions of the maintenance of facilities, access to social opportunities, perceptions of safety and security and noise levels, and future programmatic opportunities.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

In December 2010, University Villages promoted its annual survey in e-mails to students and in the UV newsletter, the *Cornerstone*. As incentive, respondents were promised an opportunity to win up to \$225 in UMoney certificates.

Residence Life used Select Survey, an online information gathering system, and a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions, to collect data. The survey prompted residents to rate or describe their level of satisfaction with various aspects of UV facilities, programs, and services; as well as to provide overall comments and suggestions. The questions asked respondents: to rate their experience with main office staff, assess if the maintenance work had been completed in a timely manner, assess if community assistants provided social opportunities as well as enforced policy consistently, if the respondent had been assisted by their community assistant, if the resident felt safe living in the UV, identify what types of programs residents would like to attend, assess the level of noise in the complexes, and note of awareness of the process to turn in a work order. Names were excluded thereby assuring respondents of confidentiality.

The survey remained open until January 31, 2011, offering vacationing residents an opportunity to participate upon their return to campus. Throughout the spring semester, UV staff compiled data and calculated percentages. After distributing survey results to the director of Residence Life and the UV staff, the unit awarded prizes to select respondents chosen by lottery.

FINDINGS

A total of 574 apartments received information about the online survey, and 108 residents completed it for a response rate of approximately 19 percent, a 1 percentage point increase from the 2009-10 survey.

Responses to demographic questions indicated that the majority of respondents were single students (26%). Married students with dependents comprised the second largest group of respondents (23%). In 2009-10, this group answered in the majority and comprised 33 percent of the responses. Respondents identified themselves as Caucasian (68%), Asian-Pacific Islander (12%), American Indian-Alaskan Native (7%), other (10%), African American (0%), and Hispanic (5%).

The majority of respondents were satisfied with UV services, facilities, and programs, while noting the following areas for improvement: the visibility and accessibility of community assistants, and policy enforcement, the availability of internet services, UV outdoor programming, and communication with residents regarding Residence Life policies.

Respondents' interaction with main office staff was relatively unchanged in 2010-11 from 2009-10 results (see table 1). This year, Residence Life included an additional category marked "Other" in which respondents noted "NA" or "nothing" or that they had had no interactions with office staff.

An increase in negative feedback (from two percent to six percent in 2011) in respondents' experiences with the Residence Life main office staff could be the result of a change of policy regarding how residents pay rent. Effective July 1, 2010, Residence Life required all rent payments to be paid in their office, not at University Villages due to internal personnel changes. Some respondents were upset with the change in process and the inconvenience it caused. Many of these residents, however, were unaware of the reasons for this change in policy at the time of the survey.

Table 1. How would you Rate your Experience with Main Office Staff (percent)

Rating	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010- 11
Pleasant	75	66	67	59
Neutral	21	27	34	32
Negative	4	7	2	6
Other (2011)				3

As evidenced in table 2, UV maintenance staff performs repairs in a timely manner a majority of the time. To complete maintenance, they occasionally need to order additional parts. However, this may not be communicated to residents. This year, Residence Life added the category of "Other," which received comments such as "NA," "have not needed any repairs," and "not completely satisfied with repair."

Table 2. Was Maintenance Work Completed in a Timely Manner (percent)

Response	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Yes	87	81	81	77
No	6	13	10	10
Repair is still not done	7	6	3	4
Other (2011)				9

The survey provided information on community assistants, including a list of specific duties associated with the position. Only five percent of respondents could not identify their community assistants. The year before, seven percent admitted as much. The UV continues its efforts to promote community assistant staff visibility.

Community assistants promoted diverse programs and recruited participants. The majority of respondents were pleased with such efforts (see table 3).

Table 3. Did Community Assistants Provide Opportunities to Meet People (percent)

Response	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Yes	43	55	52	50
No	5	2	3	11
Activities are planned; but my schedule does not allow me to attend	47	47	42	31
I don't care for any of the activities being planned	5	7	2	8

Community assistants enforced policy to the satisfaction of most residents (see table 4). However, certain situations often required additional facilitation and a more formal process. This is the time at which the community affairs coordinator or the maintenance supervisor intervenes and thus, the community assistants' involvement may go unnoticed.

For the 2010 survey, UV staff added a component to the policy enforcement question. The survey asked residents if they had been assisted by the community assistant; the response rate was 41 percent. Thus, the decline in the "yes" category is dependent upon those respondents who were not assisted by their community assistants at time of the survey. It is related, as well, to the addition of an "Other" category.

Table 4. Does Your Community Assistant Enforce Policy Consistently (percent)

Response	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Yes	70	75	81	38
Sometimes consistent	27	19	14	6
Never enforces policy	3	6	4	5
Have not been assisted by CA (2011)				39
Other (2011)				12

While the majority of respondents felt safe living in the UV (see table 5), some suggested the following measures for improvement: deadbolt locks on apartment doors (52%), more visible patrols (47%), and additional lighting (39%).

Table 5. Do you Feel Safe Living in the UV (percent)

Response	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Yes	94	94	89	84
No	6	6	2	3
Sometimes			8	13

To encourage diversity in the UV, the unit asked residents about their experiences, and solicited suggestions for future UV programming (see table 6). Prior to reviewing the following responses, community assistants hosted several cultural food events including a Pakistani Night, Chilean Food Night, Holiday Gathering, and an African New Year Celebration. Many residents attended these events and requested more of them.

Residents enjoyed the cultural food events, but responded that they would like to see more outdoor, recreational activities as well. Some respondents suggested their interest in activities that accommodate single students, in addition to students with families and children. In the past, however, these events have not been well-attended.

The 2010-11 survey did not ask residents about the following categories: "Cooking workshops," "Children's Story Time," and "None of the above." The unit left the question open ended for residents to include the types of cultural events they wanted to attend. In the "Other" category, 15 responses noted interest in activities and events such as games, cultural panels, community workshops, and international film nights.

Table 6. Which of the Following would you like to see in the Future (percent)

Diversity Programs	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Cultural Night	28	22	41	61
Cooking workshops	27	22	41	N/A

Diversity Programs	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Cultural section in the Cornerstone	23	18	30	34
Resident recipes in the Cornerstone		16	38	37
Children's Story Time	9	11	28	N/A
None of the above	9	11	23	N/A

This year, the unit asked two new questions regarding noise level and maintenance. The survey considered how residents perceived the level of noise within their apartments, (see table 7). UV staff sought to ensure that community assistants are effectively enforcing quiet hours and that residents are courteous of their neighbors.

Table 7. Rate the Level of Noise vs. Peaceful Environment around your Apartment Complex or Building

Noise Level in University Villages	2010-11
Very quiet and peaceful	27
Somewhat quiet; somewhat loud noises at time	58
Loud all the time	4
Other, please specify	12

The second question added to the survey in 2010-11 asked residents if they were aware of the process to turn in a work order (see table 8). Seventy-nine percent indicated that they knew how to turn in a work order. The majority of respondents indicated they had read the information given to them when checking into their apartments, which instructed them how to turn in a work order. The remaining responses indicated that respondents had learned how to turn in a work order from the newsletter or a neighbor.

Half of the respondents believed they could only turn in a work order when the office was open during regular hours. The remaining responses indicated that respondents understood correctly that they might turn one in anytime by calling the office phone.

Table 8. Are You Aware of the Process to Turn in a Work Order (percent)

Response	2010-11
Yes	79
No	21

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are primarily based on respondent comments and suggestions:

The unit should make readily available, or distribute as public knowledge, information regarding Residence Life policies as soon as possible to avoid confusion. Residence Life should continue to take a more proactive approach to customer service to improve services for residents overall.

1. By presenting information about maintenance protocol in the *Cornerstone*, the unit will continue to educate residents on how best to report work orders and follow up with a maintenance supervisor. In order to enhance relationships with the residents, staff should communicate matters more clearly at times of service.
2. The unit should continue to make known the names, addresses, and roles of community assistant staff. The visibility and interactions of community assistant staff are crucial to the community building success of the

UV residents; when they visit with residents, community assistants foster open, valuable communication. The unit will continue to improve this relationship.

3. While Residence Life is still not physically or financially able to install deadbolt locks on every apartment at this time, the unit should continue to explore options for the future.
4. Residence Life should continue to plan quality programming that accommodates resident requests with the unit's desire for financially solvent programming.
5. Residence Life should continue to explore options for providing internet service to all UV apartments.