Campus Living Services and Residence Life
Assessment Committee

Michigan State University East Lansing, Michigan

Written by
Larry Long and Kyle Kujawa

on behalf of the

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Assessment Committee

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Committee Members:

Misty Archer Paul Goldblatt Larry Long Sheryl Mauricio

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The comments in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not reflect the perspective of the Department of Campus Living Services and Residence Life, the Division of Residential and Hospitality Services, or Michigan State University. If you have any questions about this report, please contact the lead author at larrydlong@gmail.com.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Recommendations	1
Background	2
Introduction	
Review of Related Literature	2
Overview of the Study	4
Research Approach	4
Sample and Hall Characteristics	4
Overall Results	
Experience by Room Type	
Experience by Resident Type	5
Experience by Gender	6
Satisfaction	7
Residential Retention	7

ABSTRACT

The authors assessed the experiences of 1,303 domestic, first-year students, who lived in the halls with the largest population of transitionally housed residents (Akers, Armstrong, Bryan, Hubbard, McDonel) to determine if there was a difference in the residential experience of transitionally housed and non-transitionally housed students. One third of the sample was transitionally housed. Overall, the experience of students in transitional housing was comparable to the experience of students in standard rooms, with the exception of perception of safety. Female students in transitional housing tended to feel less safe on-campus compared to their male and female counterparts in standard rooms.

Regarding residential retention, students in transitional housing were less likely to report they would not return to on-campus compared to students in standard rooms. This demonstrates that living in transitional housing did not necessarily influence students to move-off campus.

The main reasons both transitionally housed and non-transitionally students moved off-campus was because of space concerns and the ability to live with friends.

Some of the statistically significant differences in the Staff Performance and Floor Community tables demonstrate that student staff members (i.e., resident assistants) checking in on transitionally housed students had a positive influence. Compared to residents in standard rooms, transitionally housed students were more likely to perceive their student staff member as available and were more likely to report that floor residents interacted.

Unlike the extant literature on triples, this study revealed that transitionally housed residents did not fare worse compared to standard room residents. Moreover, in some cases transitionally housed residents reported greater satisfaction and learning compared to residents of standard rooms (see page 5).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to support and engage transitionally housed residents. During the fall 2011 semester, CLSRL staff organized several initiatives to support transitionally housed students. This included meetings during opening, the facilitation of roommate agreements, and intentional social programs. For some of the items composing the Staff Performance and Floor Community factors, transitionally housed respondents were more satisfied compared to their peers in standard rooms. Residence educators should continue to support the social integration of transitionally housed students. Residence educators might accomplish this by making meaningful connections with residents, organizing social opportunities, and using MAP-Works data to identify residents who are having difficulties acclimating.

Give residents the option of choosing their roommates. This study revealed that dyads tended to be more satisfied with their residential experience compared to isolates and students in standard rooms. Allowing three residents to choose one another might reduce some of the social tensions experienced by the third resident.

Improve floor community. The Floor Community factor had the lowest rating. Many respondents did not view themselves as valued members of their floor, did not know residents on their floor, and did not believe that residents interacted. Improving the social integration of all residents will improve the overall effectiveness of the residential program at Michigan State.

Support the social integration of transitionally housed women. Transitionally housed women were the least satisfied with the floor community they experienced. Residence educators should identify strategies to integrate transitionally housed women.

Promote student learning. The Personal Development factor had the second lowest rating. Many respondents indicated living on-campus had a weak influence on their ability to gain conflict resolution and time management skills. Residence educators should identify strategies to promote student learning. Possible strategies include organizing educational sessions based on the needs of residents, posting educational bulletin boards, and using MAP-Works data to identify academically at-risk residents.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

High residential retention and a high first-year student enrollment created a situation where more students wished to live on-campus than space permitted. To resolve the situation, a limited number of students were assigned to transitional housing, the temporary assignment of an additional resident to a room designated as a double or quad. As bed spaces became available, residents in transitional housing were given the option of moving into standard rooms. In some cases, residents chose to remain in transitional housing voluntarily. The purpose of this report is to describe how the experience of residents in transitional housing compared to the experience of residents in standard rooms.

Review of Related Literature

Most of the research on transitional housing – known in the literature as triples - was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. The research found that living in triples might influence college students psychologically and socially (Mullen & Felleman, 1990). According to Ronchi and Sparacino (1982), living in a triple increases the social density that residents experience. Social density refers to the number of people in a space and spatial density refers to the space that is available to each person. Ronchi and Sparacino found that social density had a greater impact on college students compared to spatial density. The researchers explained that an increase in unsolicited social interactions may lead to increased feelings of crowdedness and lack of control. The result is that some residents might distance themselves to avoid social interactions.

Aside from social characteristics, research has also explored how the physical characteristics of a residence hall influence the experiences of residents in standard rooms and triples. Corridor length is positively associated with feelings of crowdedness (Baum, Aiello, & Calesnick, 1978; Mullen & Felleman, 1990). Residents who live on residential wings with long corridors tend to report greater feelings of crowdedness compared to residents whose residential wings have shorter corridors. Floor level is negatively associated with feelings of crowdedness (Kaya & Erkip, 2001). Residents who live on the upper floors of a high-rise tend to express less feelings of crowdedness. Kaya and Erkip (2001) explained this finding by stating that residents of upper floors have a greater view from their windows, which gives the perception of more space.

Research on gender differences has produced mixed results. Some studies found women experience more distress as a result of living in triples compared to men (Aiello, Baum, & Gormley, 1981; Kaya & Erkip, 2001), whereas one study (viz., Mullen & Felleman, 1990) found the opposite. The first two studies found the

negative experiences with living in a triple can be attributed to the tendency of female students to perceive their rooms smaller (Kaya & Erkip, 2001) and to desire a high-level of social interaction with roommates (Aiello et al., 1981) compared to male students. Mullen and Felleman (1990) suggested that men in triples might experience more adverse reactions compared to women, because men tend to be used to having more personal space during same-sex interactions.

Research has also explored the formation of coalitions. Baum, Shapiro, Murray, and Wideman (1979) posited that the effects of living in a triple might influence the residents of a triple differently. The researchers proposed that two residents might form a coalition (or dyad), thus isolating the third resident. The researchers found that isolates had a greater perception of crowding and perceived less control compared to the other two roommates.

A recent study by Clark, Jackson, and Everhart (2012) explored if the historically documented negative effects of tripling can be found with today's student population. The researchers assessed the experiences of 141 residential first-year students and found no difference in depression, anxiety, and stress levels of students in doubles and triples. The researchers also found no difference in the psychological wellbeing of males and females.

Overall, the extant literature has shown that tripling college students might cause psychological and social distress. It should be noted, however, that much of the extant literature was conducted three or more decades ago. It is not clear if the findings apply to today's college students. Modern amenities and suite-style rooms might alleviate some of the distress that is associated with living in a triple.

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OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Research Approach

In November of 2011, the Campus Living Services and Residence Life Assessment Committee disseminated the Floor Community Survey to the residential population at Michigan State University to assess the satisfaction and learning of the on-campus residents. The lead author of this report matched the survey responses with the housing information of the respondents to determine the room type (standard or transitional), the length of time in transitional housing, and the floor level of the respondents. The authors used these variables, because the extant literature indicated that the factors affect the residential experience of students. The authors also explored the formation of coalitions. The extant literature indicated that the effects of living in transitional housing can be more pronounced for the third resident (the isolate). Within the context of this study, isolates were defined as the third roommate in a room where two residents requested one another or the person who volunteered to move when a room was de-tripled.

Sample and Hall Characteristics

This report is limited to the experiences of domestic, first-year students, who lived in the halls with the largest population of transitionally housed residents. The sample consisted of 1303 respondents from Akers, Armstrong, Bryan, Hubbard, and McDonel (see Table 1). One third of the respondents were transitionally housed and 44% of the sample identified as male. The majority of the respondents identified as White (77%). The next two largest ethnicity groups were Black or African American (10%) and Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (5%).

One third of the sample was transitionally housed.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

	N	%
Hall	1303	100.0
Akers	383	29.4
Armstrong	182	14.0
Bryan	269	20.6
Hubbard	364	27.9
McDonel	105	8.1
Living Arrangement	1303	100.0
Not transitional	873	67.0
Transitional	430	33.0
Requested Roommate?	1303	100.0
Not transitional	565	43.4
No	530	40.7
Yes	208	16.0
Days in Transitional Housing	1303	100.0
Not transitional	873	67.0
1 - 7 days (less than 1 week)	35	2.7
8 - 28 days (1 to 4 weeks)	193	14.8
29 - 56 days (1 to 2 months)	64	4.9
57 or more days (2 or more months)	138	10.6

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100, due to rounding error

In terms of the halls, Akers was located in the East Neighborhood, had 6 floors, and eight-person suites (four residents per room) with shared restrooms between the suites. Armstrong and Bryan were located in the Brody Neighborhood, had 4 floors, and two-person rooms with community restrooms. Hubbard was located in the East Neighborhood, had 12 floors, and four-person suites (two residents per room) with shared restrooms between the suites. McDonel was located in the River Trail Neighborhood, had 6 floors, and four-person suites (two residents per room) with shared restrooms between the suites. Some of the halls offered single rooms and apartments, as well. Residents of these rooms were not included in the analysis.

OVERALL RESULTS

The Floor Community Survey described the residential experience through the use of six factors. Factors are composite measures that simplify and clarify the assessment of complex concepts. The highest performing factor was Floor/Neighborhood Safety and the lowest performing factor was Floor Community (see Table 2). Residence educators should focus on improving the of belonging that residents sense experience. This would improve experience of both transitionally and nontransitionally housed residents.

Experience by Room Type

The authors compared the experiences of domestic, first-year students in standard rooms and transitional housing. Overall, the experience of students in transitional housing was comparable to the experience of students in standard rooms (see Table 3). With the exception of perception of safety, there was no statistically significant difference in the factor scores by room type. Female students in transitional housing tended to feel less safe on-campus than their male peers in transitional housing and female and male peers in standard rooms.

Experience by Resident Type

Differences in the residential experience of students in standard rooms and transitional housing emerged once one split the transitionally housed respondents into dyads and isolates (see Table 4). Statistically significant differences by resident type were found for the Staff Performance, Floor

Empathy, Floor Community, and Personal Development factors. Dyads were also more satisfied with their student staff member's performance compared to isolates and students in standard rooms. Dyads were more satisfied with Floor Empathy compared to isolates. Regarding the Floor Community and Personal Development factors, Dyads rated their experience better than isolates and students in standard rooms and students in standard rooms rated their experience better than isolates. In addition, there was a resident type by gender interaction for the Floor Community factor. The relationship was such that female isolates were less satisfied with the floor community they experienced compared to the five other groups (male isolates, male/female dyads, male/female standard room residents). Moreover, female dyads were more satisfied with the floor community they experienced compared to female standard room residents and isolates. Residence educators should focus on socially integrating female isolates. There was also a gender difference within each resident type. Male respondents felt a greater sense of community compared to respondents. Previous research indicated that female college students have a greater desire to have meaningful relationships with their roommates compared to male college students. Residence educators can help facilitate these relationships by organizing social programs and mediating conflicts.

Overall, the experience of students in transitional housing was comparable to the experience of students in standard rooms.

Table 2 – Factor Means (and Standard Deviations) by Room Type and Gender

	Room	п Туре	Ger		
	Standard	Transitional	Male	Female	Total
Measure	(n = 873)	(n = 430)	(n = 577)	(n = 726)	(N = 1303)
Mentor Performance	6.07 (1.12)	6.21 (1.05)	6.21 (1.06)	6.04 (1.12)	6.11 (1.10)
Floor Climate	6.11 (1.06)	6.09 (1.22)	6.16 (1.12)	6.06 (1.11)	6.10 (1.11)
Floor/Neighborhood Safety	6.20 (1.03)	6.13 (1.14)	6.35 (1.01)	6.04 (1.09)	6.18 (1.07)
Floor Empathy	5.51 (1.28)	5.52 (1.36)	5.77 (1.25)	5.31 (1.32)	5.51 (1.31)
Floor Community	5.05 (1.66)	5.25 (1.59)	5.57 (1.54)	4.76 (1.63)	5.12 (1.64)
Personal Development	5.41 (1.33)	5.48 (1.27)	5.49 (1.38)	5.39 (1.25)	5.43 (1.31)

Note. 1- Strongly Disagree/Not at all; 4- Neutral/Moderately; 7-Strongly Agree/To a great degree.

Experience by Gender

The Analysis of Variance of the performance factors revealed a difference in the residential experience by gender (see Table 3 and Table 4). Male respondents rated their experience higher than female respondents for all six factors. The largest difference existed for the Floor Community factor. This was driven by the resident type by gender interaction. Specifically, the large gap in the sense of community of male and female respondents can be attributed to the poor sense of community that female isolates experienced. Female isolates rated the floor community they experienced lower than the five other groups (male isolates, male/female dyads, male/female standard room residents).

Table 3
Relative Effects and Factorial Analysis of Variance of Differences in Experiences by Room Type and Gender

		Relative	Effects		Statistical Results							
	Star	ndard	Trans	sitional	Room Typ	oe	Gender		Room Type x Gender			
Measure	Male	Female	Male	Female	F(df ₁ , df ₂)	Sig.	$F(df_1, df_2)$	Sig.	$F(df_1, df_2)$	Sig.		
Staff Performance	.604	.433	.571	.453	1.71(1, 855)	.192	13.00(1, 855)	<.001	<0.01(1, 855)	.960		
Floor Climate	.533	.475	.545	.472	0.07(1, 755)	.789	5.24(1, 755)	.022	2.51(1, 755)	.114		
Safety	.604	.445	.604	.413	4.06(1, 807)	.044	60.24(1, 807)	<.001	4.89(1, 807)	.027		
Floor Empathy	.610	.447	.568	.436	0.34(1, 769)	.559	40.97(1, 769)	<.001	0.24(1, 769)	.625		
Floor Community	.598	.468	.574	.414	0.30(1, 816)	.583	75.81(1, 816)	<.001	0.32(1, 816)	.570		
Personal Development	.558	.468	.537	.470	0.30(1, 840)	.587	4.96(1, 840)	.026	<0.01(1, 840)	.967		

Note. Relative effects represent the degree to which respondents in one group score high or low on a dependent variable relative to the scores of all of the respondents. Higher values correspond to higher ratings. Statistical significance was set at the .05 level. Significant differences are in **bold**.

Table 4
Relative Effects and Factorial Analysis of Variance of Differences in Experiences by Resident Type and Gender

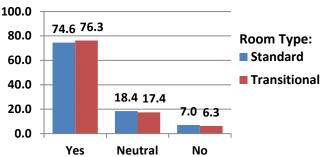
	Relative Effects						Statistical Results						
	Non Trans. Dyad		ad	Isolate		Resident Type		Gender		Res. Type x Gender			
Measure	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	F(df ₁ , df ₂)	Sig.	F(df ₁ , df ₂)	Sig.	$F(df_1, df_2)$	Sig.	
Staff Performance	.604	.433	.582	.485	.543	.384	7.27(2, 198)	.002	8.37(1, 198)	.004	0.24(2, 198)	.727	
Floor Climate	.533	.475	.558	.506	.510	.397	3.28(1, 192)	.054	5.92(1, 192)	.016	1.49(1, 192)	.229	
Safety	.604	.445	.622	.419	.556	.400	3.14(1, 190)	.060	34.10(1, 190)	<.001	1.07(1, 190)	.329	
Floor Empathy	.610	.447	.567	.467	.571	.369	4.16(2, 198)	.026	31.69(1, 198)	<.001	2.87(2, 198)	.073	
Floor Community	.598	.468	.567	.482	.591	.269	11.93(2, 219)	<.001	61.97(1, 219)	<.001	4.26(2, 219)	.023	
Personal Development	.558	.468	.534	.522	.544	.358	10.11(2, 213)	<.001	6.38(1, 213)	.012	2.44(2, 213)	.101	

Note. Relative effects represent the degree to which respondents in one group score high or low on a dependent variable relative to the scores of all of the respondents. Higher values correspond to higher ratings. Statistical significance was set at the .05 level. Significant differences are in **bold**.

Satisfaction

The Floor Community Survey asked two questions regarding resident satisfaction. The first question prompted respondents to report if they were satisfied with their on-campus experience. A Chi-Square test revealed no difference in respondents' satisfaction with their on-campus experience by room type, $\chi^2(2) = 0.49$, p > .05. About 76% of transitionally housed and 75% of non-transitionally housed respondents reported they were satisfied with their on-campus housing experience (see Figure 1).

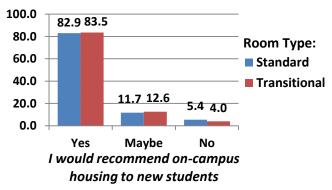
Figure 1
Residential Satisfaction by Room Type



I am satisfied with my on-campus experience

The second question asked if respondents would recommend on-campus housing to new students. A Chi-Square test revealed no difference in respondents' tendency to recommend on-campus housing by room type, $\chi^2(2) = 1.40$, p > .05. About 83% of transitionally and non-transitionally housed respondents indicated they would recommend on-campus housing to new students (see Figure 2). Overall, transitionally housed respondents were as satisfied with their on-campus housing experience as their non-transitionally housed peers.

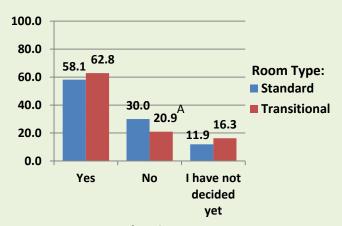
Figure 2
Residential Satisfaction by Room Type



Residential Retention

The Floor Community Survey assessed residential retention and the factors that influenced respondents' decision to live on- or off-campus. In terms of residential retention, the instrument asked respondents to report if they planned to return to on-campus housing the following year. The response options were "Yes," "No," and "I have not decided yet." A Chi-Square test revealed a weak association between respondents' intentions to live on-campus and room type, $\chi^2(2) =$ 14.11, p < .001, Cramer's V = .104. About 63% of transitionally housed respondents and 58% of nontransitionally housed respondents indicated they intended to return to on-campus housing (see Figure 3). Comparatively, 21% of transitionally housed respondents and 30% of non-transitionally housed respondents indicated they did not intend to return to on-campus housing. A follow-up analysis using Configural Frequency Analysis revealed that the percentage of transitionally housed respondents indicating they did not intend to return was statistically lower than one would expect. This supports the conclusion that living in transitional housing did not negatively influence the residential retention of transitionally housed students.

Figure 3
Residential Satisfaction by Room Type



Are you planning to return to on-campus housing next year?

Note: A = Anti-type (frequency is lower than expected); T = Type (frequency is higher than expected). $\chi^2(2) = 14.11$, p < .001, Cramer's V = .104.

Reasons for Leaving

Respondents who indicated they did not plan to return to on-campus housing were prompted to report their main reasons for moving off-campus. Table 5 lists the reasons that respondents could select. The table also presents the percentage of respondents who marked a particular reason by gender by resident type. Amenities were not a factor for the majority of male respondents. Male dyads indicated that privacy and personal space influenced their decision to move off-campus, whereas the majority of male isolates chose to move off-campus for cost reasons and because they could live with friends. The main reasons for moving off-campus for the majority of female respondents were personal space and the ability to live with friends.

The authors conducted a Chi-Square test to determine if there was an association between respondents' reasons for leaving and resident type. For male respondents, there was a statistically significant association for "fewer rules and regulations," $\chi^2(2) = 9.77$, p < .05. The association can be attributed to the low percentage of male dyads (45%) that selected the option compared to isolates (62%) and residents of standard rooms (73%). For female respondents, there was no statistically significant association for any of the reasons. This indicates that female respondents' reasons for leaving did not vary by resident type.

Reasons for Returning

Respondents who indicated they planned to live oncampus were prompted to report their main reasons for returning to on-campus housing. The reasons that respondents could select are listed in Table 6. The table also presents the percentage of respondents who marked a particular reason by gender by resident type. The majority of transitionally housed males indicated that the food options and the ability to live with friends influenced their decision to return to on-campus housing. Parking and privacy were not a reason for the majority of the transitionally housed male respondents. Location and food options were the main reasons for returning for transitionally housed females. Similar to transitionally housed males, parking and privacy did not influence transitionally housed females to return to oncampus housing.

The authors conducted a Chi-Square test to see if there was an association between a reason for returning and resident type. There was no statistically significant association for any of the reasons. This indicates that respondents' reasons for returning to on-campus housing did not vary by resident type.

Table 5 – Reasons for Leaving by Gender

What were your main reasons	P	ercentage	e of Males	j		Percentage of Females					
for moving off-campus or not returning to on-campus housing?	Not Trans. (n = 97)	Dyad (n = 38)	Isolate (n = 13)	Total (n = 148)	χ ² (2)	Not Trans. (n = 164)	Dyad (n = 27)	Isolate (n = 12)	Total (n = 203)	χ ² (2)	
Graduating/Not returning	4.1	10.5	0.0	5.4	3.00	4.3	3.7	16.7	4.9	3.77	
Cost	52.6	52.6	61.5	53.4	0.38	59.8	63.0	33.3	58.6	3.46	
Location	42.3	34.2	30.8	39.2	1.17	30.5	25.9	25.0	29.6	0.36	
Parking	36.1	34.2	30.8	35.1	0.16	40.9	44.4	50.0	41.9	0.47	
Privacy	53.6	57.9	53.8	54.7	0.21	49.4	48.1	41.7	48.8	0.27	
Personal space	67.0	76.3	46.2	67.6	4.06	68.9	81.5	83.3	71.4	2.68	
Independence	55.7	39.5	46.2	50.7	2.98	53.0	63.0	66.7	55.2	1.60	
Can live with friends	64.9	55.3	92.3	64.9	5.83	64.0	66.7	75.0	65.0	0.63	
Food options	14.4	21.1	38.5	18.2	4.71	36.0	33.3	8.3	34.0	3.81	
Facilities	27.8	21.1	15.4	25.0	1.37	30.5	33.3	41.7	31.5	0.69	
Amenities	23.7	18.4	7.7	20.9	1.97	31.1	29.6	50.0	32.0	1.92	
Ability to study	17.5	31.6	30.8	22.3	3.70	29.3	29.6	16.7	28.6	0.89	
Fewer rules and regulations	73.2	44.7	61.5	64.9	9.77	46.3	55.6	50.0	47.8	0.81	

Note. The authors used a Chi-Square test to assess if there was an association between respondents' reasons for moving off-campus and resident type (not transitional, dyad, or isolate). Chi-Square (χ^2) values greater than 5.99 (marked in **bold**) indicate a statistically significant association exists.

Table 6 – Reasons for Returning by Gender

What were your main reasons		Percentage	of Males	5	Percentage of Females					
for returning to on-campus housing? (Select all that apply)	Not Trans. (n = 180)	Dyad (n = 102)	Isolate (n = 33)	Total (n = 315)	χ ² (2)	Not Trans. (n = 325)	Dyad (n = 103)	Isolate (n = 32)	Total (n = 460)	χ ² (2)
Cost	53.9	57.8	42.4	54.0	2.39	52.0	52.4	53.1	52.2	0.02
Location	53.9	57.8	42.4	54.0	3.37	83.1	78.6	81.2	82.0	1.05
Parking	12.2	9.8	3.0	10.5	2.59	9.2	10.7	12.5	9.8	0.47
Privacy	12.8	14.7	12.1	13.3	0.26	8.0	6.8	9.4	7.8	0.27
Personal space	18.3	21.6	33.3	21.0	3.82	14.8	15.5	25.0	15.7	2.31
Independence	21.7	19.6	27.3	21.6	0.87	17.2	15.5	21.9	17.2	0.69
Can live with friends	55.0	64.7	54.5	58.1	2.71	56.6	59.2	56.2	57.2	0.23
Food options	78.9	83.3	66.7	79.0	4.19	71.4	71.8	62.5	70.9	1.18
Facilities	47.2	50.0	36.4	47.0	1.87	42.8	40.8	40.6	42.2	0.16
Amenities	27.8	25.5	15.2	25.7	2.33	26.2	25.2	21.9	25.7	0.29
Ability to study	34.4	35.3	27.3	34.0	0.76	35.1	27.2	31.2	33.0	2.25
To live near my academic college	35.0	37.3	36.4	35.9	0.15	36.6	37.9	34.4	36.7	0.14
To access campus resources	48.3	52.0	39.4	48.6	1.59	60.0	57.3	46.9	58.5	2.15
Work opportunities on campus	27.2	30.4	33.3	28.9	0.67	32.6	35.0	25.0	32.6	1.10
The people I can meet	48.9	59.8	48.5	52.4	3.33	57.5	60.2	43.8	57.2	2.76
Having an RA on the floor	15.0	8.8	18.2	13.3	2.90	13.5	19.4	12.5	14.8	2.29
Hall programs and activities	18.9	21.6	21.2	20.0	0.33	23.7	33.0	31.2	26.3	3.94

Note. The authors used a Chi-Square test to assess if there was an association between respondents' reasons for returning and resident type (not transitional, dyad, or isolate). Chi-Square (χ^2) values greater than 5.99 (marked in **bold**) indicate a statistically significant association exists.

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Michigan State University

