

Teddy Griswold

Matthew Griffin

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"More Than Just Housing: The Unseen Benefits of Tulane's Campus Living Rule"

When the topic of housing arises in conversations between Tulane University students, many are outraged at the school and the Housing and Residence Life office. Tulane's new "Three-Year Live-On Requirement," which entails mandatory on-campus housing through students' junior year (Tulane University Office of Family Programs), has caused students to feel imprisoned in their dorms and to lack independence. However, students often fail to listen to the conversations of the long-term residents living in the housing surrounding the campus, whose concerns center around rising rent prices and displacement of families due to student demand. Specifically, in 2021, a four-bedroom unit on Hillary Street was listed at \$4800 per month, which triples the area's fair market rent of \$1583 for similar properties (LaRose). These drastic price increases make it difficult for long-term residents to afford housing in their neighborhood. Locern Bailey, a long-term resident who grew up in New Orleans and returned later in 2002, notes: "The green home, that hasn't always been there... That was a brick home on the corner, we knew the people that lived there. A lot of people lost their property . . . I can imagine that it was probably property taxes not being paid" (Barovick). Her observation is a consequence of studentification: "the process by which specific neighborhoods become dominated by student residential occupation" (Anderson). And many long-term residents find themselves as the ones forced out in Locern's story.

Beyond preventing damage to the livelihoods of long-term residents in New Orleans, on-campus housing provides students with a range of benefits they may not immediately recognize. Living on campus increases access to academic resources, builds stronger connections to faculty and peers, and boosts student engagement in extracurricular life. Environmentally, it reduces the need for students to commute, lowering emissions and easing traffic congestion. While the policy may challenge students' sense of independence in the short term, its long-term benefits are significant and far-reaching for individual students and the broader New Orleans community. Tulane University continuing its on-campus housing requirement through students' junior year is a necessary and beneficial policy that supports community stability by relieving pressure on the local housing market, fostering student academic achievement and belonging, and promoting sustainability by reducing the environmental detriment of student commuting.

Tulane's primary reason for expanding its on-campus housing requirement to juniors is that the policy is essential to combat the growing affordability problems within the New Orleans rental market. Firstly, students add an extreme amount of demand to the housing market. According to the Tulane University registrar, over 50% of their 8,137 undergraduate students lived off-campus during the fall of 2019. These students, financially supported by their families, frequently outbid long-term renting residents for the properties surrounding campus, as the annual median household income of New Orleans residents is \$55,390 (U.S. Census), and the median family income of Tulane Students is over three times that of \$180,700. (New York Times) To accommodate these wealthier students, property developers converted duplex homes surrounding the campus into multi-bedroom apartments, allowing them to charge rent to students per room, rather than on the entire house, lucratively increasing their profitability and further discouraging long-term families from living there.

While long-term residents have banded together to combat studentification, their efforts have been ineffective due to the government's indirect financial gain from the student population. The Maple Area Residents Incorporation, a Carrollton Neighborhood Organization in New Orleans, created an advocacy group known as “Stop Doubles to Dorms” or “Stop D2D,” which collaborates with New Orleans City Council members to pass laws that regulate the conversion of their neighborhood’s properties (Barovick). However, their efforts have been fruitless because of the city’s lack of enforcement of zoning laws (Barovick), primarily due to their economic benefit. Double-to-dorm conversions increase the income of property owners, which drives up their properties’ values based on the Income Approach to Valuation in real estate (Hargrave). These higher property values produce higher property taxes that go toward the city incentivizing conversions. By placing students in on-campus housing, Tulane’s policy lessens the demand for off-campus dorm-style living, which drives down overall rent prices and makes “Double to Dorm” conversions less profitable and attractive for owners. While Tulane’s policy is a healthy solution to this issue, it is imperative that the New Orleans government stops putting profits over the displacement of long-term residents and enforces the morally correct zoning laws already in place.

Zooming in from the surrounding community, living on campus also encourages academic support and achievement among students. Research from The University of Connecticut confirms that students who stay in campus housing achieve higher academic results than off-campus students. Specifically, Theophilus Djaba, a doctoral candidate in Educational Psychology at the University of Connecticut, conducted a study where he tracked the average GPAs of freshmen and sophomores who maintained on-campus accommodation and those who chose to live off-campus. He found that on-campus students earned significantly higher

GPA—0.31 points higher in their first semester, 0.17 points higher in their second semester, and maintained higher cumulative GPAs by the end of their second year (Djaba). The study also tracked students' retention and graduation rates and found that on-campus residents were 21 percent more likely to return for their second year and had graduation rates 15 percent higher than off-campus peers (Djaba). On top of that, a similar study conducted at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics—one of Hungary's most prestigious technical institutions—further confirms these academic advantages of on-campus housing. The research, led by Klaudia Zeleny in collaboration with data science expert Roland Molontay and academic director Mihály Szabó, drew from administrative records of 28,729 students and detailed surveys from 752 participants regarding housing, social background, and study habits. The results showed that students in their study who lived on campus benefitted from greater university resource availability, structured living conditions, and academic support networks which resulted in higher credit indexes, Hungary's measure of GPA, and a dropout rate of 10.7% lower than their peers who lived off campus (Zeleny, Molontay, and Szabó). These findings conclude that Tulane's policy puts students in an active and supportive academic environment that increases their GPA and likelihood of graduating.

In addition to these statistical benefits, Tulane's housing policy functions as a vital component in developing student engagement alongside the campus community, creating a superior college experience. Research conducted at The Ohio State University Center for the Study of Student Life reveals that students who become active on campus develop better connections to their institution and enhance their involvement. Specifically, their 2023 Student Life Survey reported that 78.4% of students who participated in at least one campus activity averaged a belonging score of 3.00 out of 4, compared to non-participating students who

averaged 2.77. The ability to connect better with the university stands strongest among students in campus housing because the proximity provides maximum opportunities for event attendance and organizational membership. Additionally, students involved with campus activities develop stronger faculty relationships by 2.2 times and experience professional goal-setting opportunities 3.3 times more frequently (Center for the Study of Student Life). Building these relationships with faculty members through professional opportunities significantly benefits students' individual and career development. Through its junior-year residential requirement, Tulane maintains an environment that encourages student networking activities, leadership advancement, and personal growth. Students who leave their university housing early develop lower involvement in university activities, which leads them to participate less in student clubs and academic programs. Furthermore, the established campus living environment creates an atmosphere that brings diverse students together in common areas where they are exposed to different cultures through group engagements.

Another overlooked positive of Tulane University's housing policy is that it supports major urban sustainability objectives. As a result of keeping students at the campus center, Tulane as a university produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions while creating less congestion and pollution on the roads. Specifically, a study on the impact of student commuting emissions was conducted by Professor of Systems Engineering Detlof von Winterfeldt and Psychology professor Richard S. John at the University of Southern California, where they surveyed USC students about their commuting habits, reviewed existing literature on sustainable transportation, and conducted focus groups to understand student motivations for their commuting choices. Their results discovered that student solo commuting produced 17,969 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent each year, which accounted for 8.6 percent of the university-wide emissions and 21

percent of transportation-generated emissions (Winterfeldt). Off-campus students who use their vehicles or public transit create major environmental problems that tax city infrastructure and ultimately place more tax on residents. The sole practice of one person at a time driving to and from class and campus buildings creates extra traffic congestion and urban pollution, which worsens the environmental problems the city encounters. Instead, the dormitory living arrangement promotes walking and biking since many essential places like classrooms, dining facilities, and study locations remain accessible over short distances. The junior-year student dormitory requirement at Tulane University further decreases off-campus transportation needs, which reduces environmental pressure on New Orleans. Numerous universities nationwide acknowledge their role in developing sustainable urban development, while Tulane University demonstrates this approach through its student residency policy that supports climate change reduction initiatives.

Students commonly justify living off-campus because they believe it delivers reduced costs, peaceful surroundings, and personal autonomy, which mirrors actual living after graduation. For example, Sterling Frost, a junior studying finance, says, “Living off-campus gave me the freedom to design my schedule without worrying about dorm rules or noisy neighbors.” Similarly, junior Psychology major Owen Diesel insists, “The cost of my shared off-campus apartment was significantly lower per month than the new on-campus rates Tulane set for juniors.” Although these student testimonials demonstrate authentic housing experiences, they neglect important factors that contradict the proclaimed benefits of off-campus living. The apparent low cost of off-campus housing is deceptive when people overlook the hidden costs of utilities and furniture, combined with renters’ insurance, transportation expenses, and significantly higher security deposits, all of which increase the actual living expenses.

Specifically, an article written by finance author Meaghan Hunt from Bankrate in 2025 found that students living off-campus spent an average of \$2700 more annually after adding these overlooked expenses. Furthermore, the belief that off-campus residence brings peace and privacy fails to match the actual chaos experienced by students living in rental areas of New Orleans. The Tulane Hullabaloo published an opinion article in 2023, which revealed that the increase in housing density due to student tenants has increased trash accumulation, parking problems, and noise, deteriorating the quality of surrounding neighborhoods. Some residents living in areas with a high influx of student renters have described their neighborhood as a “neighborhood without neighbors,” highlighting the lack of community and respect for others apparent in off-campus living (Barovick). The realities demonstrate that off-campus housing creates disruptive environments with unstable conditions, which work against student independence while eliminating the tranquility students desire.

Tulane University’s housing policy fell short in caring for its students when implementing their policy, as many current sophomores had entered full-year off-campus leases before the policy’s announcement under the belief that they would be allowed to live off-campus as juniors. After the announcement of the policy, students rushed for different solutions, including studying abroad, which provides an exemption from on-campus living requirements in the spring if done in the fall. Sophomore Marketing and Management double major Ella Arrington shared, “I had already signed a lease by February of freshman year, and when Tulane announced the new rule, my only option was to go abroad or pay double, which still has its costs.” The reality shows that numerous students selected the fall semester-long study abroad programs to escape paying both their off-campus rental expenses and the average of \$10,758 for Tulane’s included housing costs. The situation threw students into unexpected, expensive

decisions that separated them from their campus community during a crucial academic and professional development year. To resolve this issue, Tulane should have offered temporary exemptions to those who had signed a legally binding lease before they announced the policy, as it is unfair that they should have to choose to pay for two places to live or lose their valuable on-campus opportunities. However, the university's present communication of the policy has made incoming and current freshman aware not to sign leases for their junior year, preventing the problem from recurring and keeping the continuation of the policy feasible.

Students' frustration regarding Tulane's extension of their housing policy is understandable, but their frustrations often overlook its deeper personal and community-wide advantages. In a city fighting with Double to Dorm conversions that have worsened the housing affordability crisis, Tulane's decision to keep students in on-campus housing through their junior year directly reduces the pressure fueling this trend. These conversions inflate property values and incentivize landlords to evict long-term tenants in favor of wealthier student renters, accelerating rent hikes and neighborhood displacement. Tulane's housing policy not only slows this process but also keeps students embedded in a structured environment that supports academic success, builds community, and reduces the environmental strain caused by commuting. The research is clear: students living on campus achieve higher GPAs, stay enrolled at higher rates, graduate more often, and engage more deeply with the university, feeling a greater sense of belonging. The proximity to class, campus events, faculty, and student organizations creates stronger connections and a richer college experience. Tulane's decision contributes to the city's sustainability efforts by reducing off-campus traffic and emissions. While the policy is criticized among some students, its benefits for academic achievement, community stability, and environmental sustainability far outweigh the perceived limitations. By

prioritizing student development and local equity, Tulane University's housing policy exemplifies a model of institutional responsibility that strengthens the bond between campus and community. Despite the housing affordability issues students cause in her neighborhood, Locern Bailey expresses her commitment to this bond, saying, "It's a plus getting to know young people . . . And we kind of miss it when you guys are gone. We really do" (Barovick).

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