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Housing Lottery Adds Stress to the Beginning of Spring Quarter

Emma Jaber, Arts & Entertainment Editor

After an extended spring break, Seattle University's housing lottery opened for returning students who plan to live on campus for the 2020–2021 school year. Before campus closed due to COVID-19 concerns and safety precautions on behalf of the university, students formed roommate groups for the coming year—the first step in the housing application process.

The housing portal is open for different students at varying random times, which constitutes the random system; at the allotted time, a website with the remaining choices becomes available to choose from. The process can add to stress in the beginning of spring quarter, as the lottery is completely random and all students can do is hope for the best time slot for their first choice on-campus locations.

Many students form roommate groups before the process begins, so before the lottery, many already have an idea of who they're living with in the coming year. However, that becomes an issue when certain residences on campus become full and groups have to be dissolved.

First-year pre-major Riley Gough had her sophomore housing plans changed the night before the portal opened for her, leaving her with no roommate to apply with. She decided to apply randomly to the Murphy apartments. Gough was certain she would get her first choice after being selected for the first day of the housing lottery.

However, her first choice changed when a friend reached out and a new roommate group became available. Now instead of the Murphy apartments, she'll be living in Chardin with friends.

"I was happy to change because of the random situation, and since I know who I'm living with now, I'm happy to live with the people that I want rather than the exact place that I wanted," Gough said. "It ended up working out, but the process is super stressful and doesn't seem that well thought out."

Gough feels that it's fair to randomly assign time slots, though she finds there are other elements that may not be as fair.

"I feel like it's fair because it's random, but they should make more housing options for sophomores in the Murphy apartments," Gough said. "I had one of the earliest times on the first day, and there was already almost no room left in the Murphys."

First-year Nursing major Olivia Keepes is living with a friend in Campion Hall after living in Xavier Hall for a year. Campion has a reputation of being a social hotspot on campus and also houses the Cave, an amenity that no other residence hall on campus has.



Javier Plascencia

Campion Hall pictured in the First Hill neighborhood, one of the residence halls with will house incoming Seattle University freshman and sophomores.

"It was kind of our only option," Keepes said. "Originally, I was in a group of four, and our initial goal was to get a quad in the Murphy apartments. One of our group members bailed the night before, so we decided to split up the group instead of taking the risk to get a random fourth member. We split up, but now we're saving money by living in Campion, so it worked out."

As far as the housing lottery system is concerned, Keepes does not agree with the process of random times as it can pose problems to existing roommate groups. When one applies as a single person to join a quad apartment, they can secure the whole room, leaving an already formed group of four people room-less, which is where Keepes takes issue.

"People that were proactive and made a group before the time aren't guaranteed to stay together because someone else secured the room just because they had an early time slot, which doesn't seem right," Keepes said. "I think people that create groups should get priority because that just makes sure that people are more likely to get their first choice and they don't have to be scrambling when housing comes around."

As far as pricing goes, living in Seattle tends to be expensive—particularly in the Capitol Hill area surrounding campus. However, even for on-campus housing, Keepes thinks the prices are a little steep.

"I understand living in Seattle is going to be expensive no matter what, but the price difference of a dorm and the on-campus apartments is a lot for almost the same experience," Keepes said.

For her future plans, Keepes has a mentorship through her major and has already thought about housing for the year after next. Many students split off-campus houses in their junior and senior years, so she's considering that option as well. Keepes knows a student currently living in a house and hopes to move in for the 2021–22 school year.

"Tentatively, I think I will live off campus as an upperclassman," she said. "I have a mentor that can kind of pass down a house, but we'll see how that works out."

Students across the country are thinking about the future of their college experience in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. The anticipation and process of housing applications can be simultaneously exciting and stressful. Seattle U students are hopeful that they will be returning to campus in September, fulfilling their housing plans for the coming school year.