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| Essential Life Skills  Information campaign proposal | | |
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# Cover Letter

Tuscaloosa, AL

March 24, 2024

University of Alabama Housing Outreach Staff, University of Alabama On-Call Safety Personnel

University of Alabama Housing

All,

I am writing to propose an information campaign primarily aimed at incoming freshman students regarding student ignorance regarding safety and housing security while living on-campus. At the request of several students, I’ve researched the student body’s general knowledge about fire safety, including in the kitchen and laundry rooms, as well as their knowledge on the general process of renting a property or apartment after their freshman year. As I’ve found the student body overwhelmingly lacking, this proposal contains a project designed to kickstart student knowledge and encourage them to be proactive regarding their own safety.

Please feel free to contact me at (555) 555-5555 with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Firstname Lastname,

UA Housing

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# Proposal

## Executive Summary

This proposal addresses the ignorance of the student body regarding both the process of living off-campus and the various bad habits that pose safety or fire risks when living independently. While UA does provide minimal information regarding the former (and little on the latter), students have reached out regarding the lack of presentation of said information – while there, students don’t know about it, aren’t referred to it, and don’t know to search for it.

This proposal seeks to solve said issues by establishing an information and advertising campaign targeted towards freshmen students, educating them, and ensuring that poor habits are curbed.

## Background Information

In recent years, according to student testimonials, more and more freshmen are **lacking essential life skills** that make transitioning into and out of university housing difficult, as well as causing safety hazards while in the building. Students have expressed concern in surveys regarding a lack of knowledge and support when transitioning into off-campus housing and have indicated that a vast majority of campus makes no effort into developing the bare minimum culinary skills while living on campus. Instead, students **rely on the campus dining halls** to the point where they do not cook at all. Lastly, several students lack several miscellaneous habits, such as clearing dryer lint or locking dorm rooms, which should be encouraged in all adults.

While the problems regarding off-campus housing are arguably **not under the university’s remit**, a lack of culinary skills not only **harms students**, but also causes fire and safety hazards for the residence halls and the building. Additionally, failure to lock doors encourages students to not carry their keys on-hand, **leading to lockouts,** but also **encourages** theft of property in unsecured rooms.

## Proposed Project

This proposal would implement the following key changes:

* An active campaign advertising the university’s [off-campus housing resources](https://offcampushousing.sa.ua.edu/), including via e-mail, community boards, and RA meetings.
* Written and regular reminders about fire safety for on-campus students, with emphasis on dining resources.
* An audit of current student awareness and existing outreach programs by other departments

## Potential Benefits

The proposed project would have several immediate benefits to UA operations:

* Increased fire safety awareness in kitchens will prevent fire alarms due to trivial culinary mistakes, such as leaving stove burners on overnight or over-microwaving food to the point of combustion.
  + False fire alarms are not only expensive to disable, requiring a response from a fire station and housing staff before students are permitted re-entry.
  + According to the 2023 [UA Fire & Safety Report](https://police.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2023-Final-Clery-Master-Campus-Security-Annual-Report.pdf) (pg. 170-172), from 2020 onwards, kitchen fires alone cost thousands of dollars in terms of property damage
  + The [UA Fire Log](https://ehs.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Firelog107-updated-8302023.pdf) showcases a vast majority of unintentional fires are either kitchen-related or dryer-related.
    - While no details have been made public, internal statistics show that of the kitchen fires most often seen on campus, many are able to be prevented or mitigated, yet students fail to do so. In some cases, students accidentally propagate the fire (eg. water on grease).
    - Internally, the ratio of fire alarms compared to actual fires is roughly StatisticGoesHere, with most alarms being triggered in kitchens due to burnt food.
    - Housing is fined DollarAmountHere per false alarm, which instead of being issued as fines to students judged responsible on a base-by-case basis, is absorbed by our (made up) fire incidents budget.
* Increased awareness of off-campus housing timelines **can reduce the number of** students requiring extensions for dorm closing.
* A minimalized target on student dorms as a target for thefts, such as [one incident](https://www.tuscaloosanews.com/story/news/crime/2020/01/29/three-suspects-accused-of-stealing-from-tutwiler-dorm-rooms/1812264007/) in 2020 where unoccupied dorms were specifically targeted.

Additionally, the project would benefit students, which indirectly benefits the university:

* Active fire safety skills and preventative knowledge can save student lives, as well as prevent mass financial loss.
  + According to the National Fire Prevention Association, cooking fires [account for 44% of all fires](https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/nfpa-research/fire-statistical-reports/home-cooking-fires).
  + The same source cites unattended cooking as a leading contributor, an occurrence that, per student testimonials in focus groups, occurs shockingly often.
* A reduction in the number of distractions due to false fire alarms has the potential **to positively impact student grades**.
* Active encouragement about off-campus housing options and accurate timelines for when to start the process, as well as expected prices, will **lead to more students opting to live off-campus**.
  + This will help reduce the on-campus demand for housing, as the university is currently over-admitting.
  + This will also reduce the likelihood of the university being required to r**eassign students or scramble for mass leases with inflated prices, such as in 202X.**

## Procedure

1. **Examine the Status Quo (COMPLETED).** Through surveys and focus groups, students living both on and off campus have been asked about students lacking in life skills, as well as potentially hazardous habits that have been displayed in others (eg. roommates) and left unaddressed. Students universally indicated a behavior that would lead to fires or theft, as well as potential housing insecurity.
2. **Audit Existing Procedures.** Housing is certainly not the only department concerned about informing students of potential risks. While many departments claim to inform students about safety issues, such as UAPD or Orientation, as students claim many are still uninformed, it is uncertain how much is still in-practice in contrast to outdated policies that remain published.
3. **Creation of Programming Materials.** Housing staff, with collaboration from UA Strategic Communications, will develop written materials, such as cards to be attached to student doors, RA meeting plans, mass student emails, or community board notices designed to educate students (Sample materials available in Appendix B). Additionally, a team will be created to promote and potentially redesign existing materials, such as the “Lock It or Lose It” slides or the current off-campus housing website.
4. **Evaluation of Programming Materials.** As this campaign includes materials about fire safety as well as basic culinary instructions, it is imperative that UA internally evaluates all materials for compliance with local and federal regulations, laws, and guidelines.
5. **Implementation of Programming.** Over a period of one year, materials will be distributed to students through established channels as seen above.
6. **Evaluation**. This project will not be done immediately, and students will not adapt immediately. Thus, to evaluate the status of the project, benchmark meetings should be held one, three, and five years out from the project’s launch.

## Resources Required

As this is an information campaign, very few external resources will be required. Internally, this campaign would require a team composed of the following:

* Housing personnel
* Strategic Communication personnel
* Various compliance workers
* Technical staff, for implementation

## Completed Project

The result of this project will be an information campaign that will reduce burglaries, fires, and demand for on-campus housing while at the same time requiring only minimal upkeep in the form of checks to verify accuracy over time and a staff member to distribute campaign materials at regular intervals.

## Proposed Schedule

The tentative schedule for this project is as follows:

* **Audit Existing Procedures.** April 1 – 7, 2024
* **Creation of Programming Materials.** April 7 – May 1, 2024
* **Evaluation of Programming Materials.** May 1 – May 7, 2024
* **Implementation of Programming.** Start of Summer 2024
* **Evaluation.** End of Spring 2025, 2027, and 2029

## Conclusion

To conclude, this proposal outlines an information campaign that will prevent fires, theft, and housing insecurity caused by ignorance within the student body.

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# Appendix A – Competitors

It should be noted that as this is a preliminary report, no external universities have been contacted. The research below is indicative of public information, and we are not currently privy to internal emails or other forms of communication said universities address towards their student body.

## Auburn University

Auburn has an entire month dedicated to fire safety. Called [Campus Fire Safety Month](https://cws.auburn.edu/rms/pm/CampusFireSafetyMonth), Auburn identified cooking among others as sources of campus fires, complete with infographics distributed to students, firefighters on campus giving demonstrations, and in-person events hosted in the residential halls. This all occurs during August and September, months specifically for first-time students who are away from home.

Their program is comprehensive. Beyond imparting knowledge to avoid preventable mistakes, it includes specific instructions, handouts, and live demonstrations with actual equipment such as fire extinguishers.

Regarding off-campus housing, Auburn maintains a [site](https://offcampushousing.auburn.edu/) structured similarly to our own. However, their website allows for students and staff to post listings and is simpler to navigate.

Auburn University does not appear to publish measures taken for other topics, such as clearing dryer lint or locking dorms.

## University of Tennessee

The University of Tennessee is extremely vague on their safety measures. The most that is publicly available is an [outdated statement](https://news.utk.edu/2000/01/21/fire-safety-a-priority-in-ut-dorms/), almost 25 years old, in response to an incident at another university. According to an administrator, campus safety officers only train RAs and housing staff, often involving the fire department. The only record of student education is in the form of disciplinary action for ignoring a fire alarm.

The University of Tennessee maintains an off-campus housing [site](https://offcampushousing.utk.edu/resources/category/1336-living-off-campus) comparable to Auburn’s, with the inclusion of a roommate search feature for students, gated behind a campus login.

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# Appendix B – Sample Materials

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedA sample infographic in the style of this campaign is illustrated at the left, courtesy of the National Fire Prevention Association ([archive](https://web.archive.org/web/20170814182601/https:/www.nfpa.org/~/media/images/public-education/by-topic/campus/campussafetyinfographic-(2).jpg)). Said infographic would be posted in kitchens in a highly visible location near stovetops or ovens.

**Image Description.** A vertical infographic illustrating the rise in dorm fires, common times for incidents, the number of incidents per day, the fact that cooking equipment is reported in most fires, financial impact of fires, and fatality rates of fires. Additionally, safety reminders and cooking tips to avoid fires are included.