To determine which option does NOT affect the ability to generalize the survey results to all dormitory students, it is important to consider the factors that influence the representativeness and reliability of a survey sample.

A key factor for generalizability is that the sample should be representative of the entire population. The survey methodology needs to ensure that the sample captures the diversity and characteristics of the entire population.

Let's analyze each option:

(A) The fact that the survey was sent to a random sample of 500 out of 5,000 students does affect generalizability, as the size and randomness of the sample influence how well the survey results can be applied to the whole population.

(B) Sending the survey only to first-year students affects the ability to generalize, as it introduces a selection bias by excluding students from other years who might have different preferences.

(C) Of the 500 students who were sent the survey, only 160 responded. This does affect the generalizability because low response rates can introduce non-response bias and may not accurately reflect the population if the respondents are not representative of the initial random sample.

(D) This is a duplicate of (C) and essentially describes the same situation regarding the response rate and its potential impact on generalizability.

Given this analysis, the option that does NOT affect the college official's ability to generalize the survey results is that related to the specific number of students living in dormitories, independent from how they were surveyed. However, since a direct answer matching this isn't quite presented and options (C) and (D) are duplicates, under the assumption of no typos and intention for distinct points: the size of the initial random sample itself (500 students from 5,000) is not by itself a limiting factor if it was randomly selected.

Hence, the most defensible choice with a focus on capturing the format and intended distinctions might be:

(D) Of the 500 students who were sent the survey, only 160 responded.

(Note: This assessment reflects the inherent confusion due to duplication, more clarity in distinction would typically be presumed in error-free contexts.)