

RLO will offer mixed gender housing as a living option

Next fall, students will have the option to live in mixed gender communities

Chris Mayes

Staff Writer

When students line up for the housing lottery this spring, they will have the opportunity to join new mixed gender communities in halls across campus.

Last semester, Residence Life Office released an e-mail survey to all Davidson students asking, "How would you feel about the idea of Davidson College allowing students of different genders to live together in mixed gender communities?"

According to Jason Shaffer, Director of Residence Life, an overwhelming 72 percent of students supported or strongly supported the idea. So, for me, clearly this idea is something we should move forward on. The question for us becomes where do we pilot it, and how many beds do we make available?"

Judging the exact number who will choose mixed gender housing has been difficult, because while students generally want Davidson to offer the choice for mixed gender communities, only slightly more than half of students indicated that they would be likely to live in a mixed gender hall. Nearly a quarter of students, on the other hand, are

"unlikely or not at all likely" to opt for it given the choice.

"What this tells me, is that when we pilot, we have to be careful not to get ahead of ourselves," Shaffer said.

"We don't want a situation where students are being forced into a living dynamic that they aren't choosing fully to be a part of."

RLO will be offering 161 beds in Irwin Hall, Akers Hall, the fourth floor of Belk Hall and two floors in the new building. In addition, students will have the option to sign up for a mixed gender suite in Tomlinson or Duke, if they are willing to sign up as a group that would fill the suite.

As in past years, Martin Court apartments will also be available to mixed gender groups.

In spite of the notable changes this pilot represents for Davidson housing standards, there remain some areas where changes will not extend.

Specifically, community bathrooms will continue to be gender-specific, double-rooms will continue to be

single-gender and (most controversially), no mixed-gender dorms will be offered to freshmen.

Jamie Durling, a senior who has worked with the Student Government Association for some time to realize a mixed gender option, understands these concerns.

"I've met both students and faculty who were like, 'This is ridiculous, we're 20 or 30 years behind our peer institutions.' And you know, I get that. My sister is a freshman on a co-ed hall, and she's doing very well," Durling said.

But on the other hand, he said, "I've also run into former hall counselors who say something like, 'I'm glad we're taking this slowly. I think there's a great community that's being built on freshmen halls as they are now—and I don't know if that would carry over to a co-ed situation.'"

On the whole, Durling said that he believes students respect and appreciate the balanced and incremental approach Dean Shaffer has taken to this project.

"Obviously there are going to be disagreements," Durling said.

"I think Dean Shaffer is trying to respect as many points of view as possible while bringing what seems to me like an important change [to Davidson College.]"

And in any case, freshmen halls are definitively excluded from the initial experiment with mixed gender halls.

If the pilot is successful, Dean Shaffer hopes to both continue and possibly expand the option — possibly including a freshman

option in the future.

But what, according to Dean Shaffer, is success?

"Success would be that during the lottery process [mixed gender] spaces fill up just as fast or faster than our other spaces. And success would also mean that we don't have to force-assign anyone to live in a community who doesn't want to be there."

"Success means that during the school year, [our mixed gender halls] would feel like the communities on other floors — where people set reasonable community standards and live by them, and where people feel really good about living where they are."

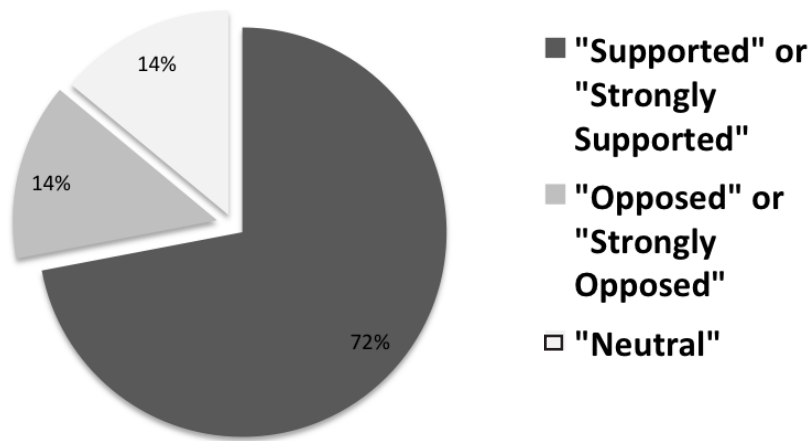
"I can imagine this being a program that continues to grow," Dean Shaffer said.

But in the end, "I don't want it to grow any farther than what student interest will allow."

"Success means that during the school year, [our mixed gender halls] would feel like the communities on other floors."

*-Jason Shaffer
Director of RLO*

How Do You Feel About Mixed-Gender Halls?



At the end of last semester, Residence Life Office sent out a survey to students regarding how they feel about living in mixed gender communities. As illustrated above, 72% strongly supported mixed gender halls. Graphic by Jonathan Marchuk

Police chief assumes position

Continued from page 1

regards to sexual misconduct and Title IX [among other things]. "The federal government is saying, 'This is what you're expected to do,' and some institutions aren't quite there yet, so I want to be able to make sure that our department and the people we work with are able to effectively handle those," Sigler said.

Another point of emphasis for Sigler is emergency response. He wants the campus to have a strong emergency response team that can be effective while it waiting for additional help to come from outside the college. "We're not going to be able to do it by ourselves," he said.

In a November interview with the Davidsonian, Student Body President Chris Ragsdale '14 discussed the College's potential to experiment with a hybrid model of campus policing, which includes more security officers and fewer sworn officers. Sigler, however, did not commit to extending this system of enforcement. He claimed that although hiring more security officers places less of a financial burden on the college and although they do have some of the same capabilities that sworn officers have, maintaining a high number of sworn officers is highly beneficial for a college campus.

"I think sworn law enforcement is able to take it to the next level and understand the enforcement aspect of what is involved in providing security to a college campus," Sigler said. "I don't know that you would get that with a private security firm."

"I'm not ruling anything out, nor am I

suggesting that [a hybrid model of police force is] the direction we're ultimately going to end up going."

Sigler asserted that maintaining a strong level of diversity in a campus police force is essential to effective law enforcement.

"If a law officer comes to me that has had a different upbringing than I'm accustomed to, it adds so much value to what we're trying to do with regards to our programs," Sigler explained.

Sigler was pleased with the presence of several female officers on Davidson's campus, saying that females are essentially a minority in law enforcement. He stressed the importance of adding people of other minority populations to campus police in order to create a highly effective police force.

Sigler did admit, however, that hiring minority law enforcers can be tough when considering the state laws by which the college must abide and the lack of vacant spots in the campus police force.

"There are certain things that Davidson College is prohibited from being able to do by law, which has an impact on my ability to recruit potential candidates," Sigler said.

"Are people going to see an immediate increase of minority candidates and hires? We don't have that many spots to work with, so it's going to be a little bit of a process," Sigler said. "But my goal is certainly to do that as we move forward, no question. At my previous institution my goal was to make sure that my minority representation mirrored the student body, and we were able to do that. So I feel every bit of confidence that we'll be able to do that here."

Since 1951

Cook to Order Breakfast
8am til 11:30am daily!
Fresh squeezed juices!

The Soda Shop

BREAKFAST • LUNCH • DINNER

104 South Main Street,
in Historic Davidson
704-896-7743

DavidsonSodaShop.com