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Student Affairs

Responsible Office:  
[University Life](#)

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Minimum Living Standards

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## Summary

This policy articulates the minimum living standards for the State University of New York (University) residence halls. In addition, it describes guidelines for the establishment of codes of behavior and statements of students' rights and responsibilities as they relate to residence hall living.

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## Policy

### I. Minimum Living Standards

Each president shall ensure that the conditions under which students live in the State University of New York (University) residence halls are conducive to their health, safety and general habitation as well as the educational mission of the campus. Minimum guidelines are provided for the implementation of overarching standards that govern the operation of on-campus residence halls. The standards shall be promulgated to the students in the campus catalog, appear in the campus handbook and in other appropriate electronic communications to the students.

A. The residence halls shall be constructed and maintained to conform with all applicable safety codes and health standards;

1. Fire Safety and Prevention

- a. Campuses shall establish comprehensive fire safety policies and procedures that address:
- i. inspection and maintenance programs for fire sprinklers fire/smoke detection and fire alarm systems;
  - ii. residential life staff responsibilities and training;
  - iii. fire safety instruction for students;
  - iv. student responsibilities; v. campus discipline and judicial practices relating to fire safety matters; and vi. evacuation procedures.

- b. Campus fire safety policies and procedures shall comply with the guidelines issued by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control. (See [Campus Fire Safety Training guidelines](#) and the [Report of the Governor's Task Force on Campus Fire Safety](#) in the related information section.)
- c. All furnishings and equipment supplied by the University should meet at least the minimum applicable fire and safety code standards in the Fire Code of New York State. Upholstered furniture shall meet all standards as described by the [California Standard 117](#) for fully sprinkled buildings and [California Standard 133](#) for all other buildings. Specific attention should be given to those sections on furnishings and equipment promulgated in the Fire Code of New York State.
- d. All newly constructed residence halls or those undergoing major renovation, as defined in the Building Code of New York State, that are owned or operated by the University or a campus based organization or affiliates shall be fully sprinkled (i.e., all areas within the residence halls) and fitted with complete fire and smoke detection and alarm systems.
- e. All existing residential facilities shall be completely equipped with fire detection and alarm systems by June 30, 2010. While this date is a final one for compliance with this policy, faster compliance is encouraged if feasible. Factors such as building construction, type, size, age, configuration, scheduled renovations and length of future service as a residence hall shall be used to assign priority for installation. Those with highest risk based on the summative assessment of the factors noted above should receive top priority.
- f. An annual review of fire and safety policies and procedures shall be completed with particular attention to the items in section I.A.1 of this part as well as efforts towards full installation of complete fire and smoke detection and alarm systems throughout all residential hall facilities.
  - i. Campuses should produce an annual report that assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of their programs and makes recommendations for improvements. Campuses shall use and file Form A – SUNY Annual Fire Safety Report by the date published by the University office of finance and business.
  - ii. A copy of this report shall be placed on file in the office of the campus chief financial officer and/or the environmental health and safety office as well as transmitted to the University office of finance and business for review and approval.

## 2. Use of Private Equipment and Appliances

- a. Students shall adhere to all applicable safety codes and health standards in the use of private equipment and appliances (where permitted).
- b. All such appliances shall be grounded or if not grounded constructed to meet electrical safety codes in such a way as to prevent electrical shocks.

## 3. Access to Residence Hall Living

Access to residence hall living on each campus that operates residence halls will be provided to disabled students without regard to their disabilities (see University policy Disabilities Protocols for Students).

## 4. Inspection and Assessment of Facilities

Inspection and assessment of the physical condition of the facility and its components (physical envelope, communication and technological infrastructure, general cosmetic conditions, environs of the residence halls, building equipment [such as elevators, exchangers, etc.] water systems, electrical service and heating systems) shall be conducted annually by the appropriate campus personnel including, but not limited to, the facilities director and residence life director. The campus should supplement their inspection results with the information from the building inspection information compiled by the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. Based on these inspections, a report of needed building repair/refurbishment projects should be created. The reports shall be distributed to appropriate campus personnel. A priority list (as viewed by appropriate personnel) of repairs/refurbishments to be undertaken in the next budget year should be part of the report, with recommended timetables for completion. Backlogs from earlier reports should be noted. The annual reports should be completed in a timely manner so that they can be used to meet appropriate budgeting deadlines set by the University

office of finance and business.

- B. The campus maintenance plan shall provide for a regular schedule of cleaning and repair for all common areas in residence halls;
1. a regular schedule for cleaning of common areas, including lounges, hallways, bathrooms and areas used by all of the residents, shall be established;
    - a. copies of the schedule shall be accessible to students.
  2. residence halls shall be kept sanitary and vermin free;
  3. all appliances provided by the campus shall be kept in working order or removed from service; and
  4. procedures shall be developed in consultation with the University office of finance and business for declaring student rooms unlivable and for removing them from service until conditions are corrected.
- C. The campus shall provide each student resident with adequate living space, furniture, and appropriate and sufficient heat, light and hot water;
1. The campus will provide each resident with adequate living and lounge furniture;
    - a. the minimum furniture complement except for short-term occupancy should be a bed, adequate area illumination, chair, dresser/chest, desk/carrel unit, closet or wardrobe;
    - b. all furniture shall be clean, sturdy, of acceptable appearance and free of major scarring;
    - c. planned regularly schedule replacement of furniture should be included in the annual facility review; and
    - d. campuses shall provide at least 70 square feet of net floor space for singly occupied rooms and at least 50 square feet of net floor space per person for multiply occupied rooms as required by §404.4.1 of the Fire Code and Property Maintenance Code of New York.
- D. The campus shall establish procedures for routine and emergency repairs to residence hall facilities;
1. Protocols shall be established to promptly address inquiries, request and complaints regarding routine repairs and maintenance for the provision of heat, lights and hot water; a. repairs regarding heat, lights and hot water shall be completed in a reasonable amount of time; b. the student shall be appraised periodically of her/his request; and c. the students shall be provided in writing with these protocols and appropriate telephone numbers for contacting repair staff.
  2. Major renovations or construction within the halls shall be completed as much as is possible, when the students are not occupying the halls;

Major construction projects that are disruptive to ongoing programs should not continue during scheduled examination periods. If the disruption cannot be stopped during these periods, then students shall be housed elsewhere.
- E. The campus shall establish procedures for redress for student residents in the event of loss of services such as heat, light and hot water in residence halls for extended periods that are within the control of the campus.
1. The procedures shall include provision for housing students elsewhere if the conditions that caused loss of heat, light or sanitary conditions or create other unsafe conditions cannot be rectified within a reasonable period.
  2. If housing the students elsewhere on campus is not possible, then the campus shall house the students in alternate housing off campus at no cost to the students.

## **II. Residence Hall Codes of Behavior**

Appropriate behavior in the residence halls and their environs is critical to the successful attainment of the campus's educational and developmental goals as well as its overall mission. Each president shall ensure that a statement of the rights and responsibilities germane to appropriate behavior of the students in residence halls is developed in accordance with the following guidelines, established by the State University of New York (University) Board of Trustees;

The statement of rights and responsibilities of students shall be promulgated to the students in the campus catalog,

appear in the campus handbook, be provided to the resident students in writing and appear in other appropriate electronic communications to the students.

- A. In the development of the campus policies on the rights and responsibilities of resident students, the campus should use the 1987 Association of College and University Housing Officers International's (ACUHO-I) [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (revised 2002) as a model.
- B. The residence hall license and other handbooks or publications, which incorporate a statement of the campus minimum living standards and the campus policies relating to student resident rights and responsibilities should use words with common and everyday meanings and should be clear and coherent.
- C. Campuses should make provisions for the enforcement of student rights and responsibilities.
- D. Unreasonable searches and seizures should not take place. Basic instruction on search procedures should be provided to resident students;
  - 1. warrantless searches can be pursued when the health and safety of the community and its members is at issue; or
  - 2. warrantless searches can be pursued when the searches are conducted as part of a regular inspection process. Ample advance notice including the approximate date of the inspections should be provided to the students; or
  - 3. warrantless searches can be pursued as allowed by law.
- E. The statement should make clear the critical importance of fire safety equipment in the building and that the fire safety systems should not be utilized for any purpose other than actual fires or fire drill procedures.
- F. Residence hall room damage processes should be clearly articulated to the students and should include:
  - 1. a commitment by the campus to inspect the student's room prior to departure so that a statement of the damages can be completed in the presence of the student;
  - 2. a commitment by the campus to provide the student with a general list of costs for typical damages before the student's departure;
  - 3. a commitment by the campus to develop and include in the state of rights and responsibilities an appeals process for the assessment of damage costs; and
  - 4. all students should be notified that if they vacate their premises in the residence hall without notification to the appropriate authorities that all of these protections are lost;
    - a. assessment, collection and use of room damage fees should follow guidelines established in the University's Fees Policy.
- G. The statement should clearly articulate that common area damages will be assessed to all students on a pro-rated basis unless an individual has or individuals have been found responsible for that damage:
  - 1. resident students should refrain from willful damage of campus property;
  - 2. resident students who witness damage done by others have a responsibility as a member of the community to report that damage and the perpetrator to appropriate authorities;
    - a. the collection and use of common area damage fees should follow the guidelines in the University's Fees Policy.
- H. The statement of rights and responsibilities should include the encouragement for students to become active in the residence hall government and in campus committees that develop policies that impact directly on residential life such as program planning, budget review, codes of conduct and residential life planning committees.

### **III. Use of Residence Halls**

The use of college facilities by non-college groups is described in the University policy on Use of Facilities by Non-Commercial Organizations.

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## **Definitions**

**Residence hall** – any facility used to house students overnight and is owned or operated by the University, campus based organizations or affiliates, or those operated under contract to the campus for the purposes of housing students overnight.

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## Other Related Information

[Fees, Rentals, and Other Charges](#)

[Use of Facilities by Non-Commercial Organizations](#)

Disabilities Protocols for Students

[Fire Code and Property Maintenance Code of New York State](#) (Website for ordering the code).

[Campus Fire Safety Training Guidelines](#)

[California Technical Bulletin 117](#) (Requirements, Test Procedure and Apparatus for Testing the Flame Retardance of Resilient Filling Materials Used in Upholstered Furniture.)

[California Technical Bulletin 133](#) (Flammability Test Procedure for Seating Furniture for Use in Public Occupancies.)

[Report of the Governor's Task Force on Campus Fire Safety](#)

[Association of College and University Housing Officers International \(ACUHO-I\)](#)

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## Procedures

There are no procedures relevant to this policy.

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## Forms

[Form A](#) - SUNY Annual Fire Safety Report

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## Authority

The following link to FindLaw's [New York State Laws](#) is provided for users' convenience; it is not the official site for the State of New York laws.

[NYS Executive Law §370-383](#) (New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code Act.)

In case of questions, readers are advised to refer to the New York State Legislature site for the menu of [New York State Consolidated](#).

Chapter 416 of the Laws of New York State of 1988 (Development of Guidelines for Minimum Living Condition Standards to be Maintained in Dormitories or Residence Halls of the University).

State University of New York Board of Trustees Resolution, 2002-140, adopted December 17, 2002.

State University of New York Board of Trustees Resolution, 89-130, adopted June 21, 1989.

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## History

On January 19, 2000, three students lost their lives in a fire in the Boland Hall dormitory at Seton Hall University in

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South Orange, New Jersey. In response to a raised awareness of the dangers associated with fires in residence halls, the Governor by [Executive Order #103](#) issued on February 14, 2000, established a Task Force on Campus Fire Safety. In July 2000, the Governor's Task Force recommended eight short-term steps and two long-term steps to improve fire safety in residence halls. Even before the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Campus Fire Safety were implemented, SUNY System Administration empanelled their own Task Force on fire safety. Considering the work of the Governor's Task Force and their own internal discussions, the Task Force recommended a series of actions to be taken by chief administrative officers at each campus to improve fire safety. The Board of Trustees adopted these recommendations on December 17, 2002 in resolution 2002-140. The required actions were communicated to campuses in a memorandum to presidents from the office of the vice chancellor for finance and business on February 12, 2003.

Chapter 416 of the laws of 1988 mandated that the State University of New York establish guidelines for "minimum living condition standards to be maintained in dormitories or residence halls of the university." A broadly representative committee was established to develop the minimum living condition standards and recommended to the Board of Trustees the overarching standards noted under section I. These recommendations were adopted by the Board of Trustees as Resolution 89-130 on June 21, 1989. The guidelines were communicated to the campuses on January 11, 1990 in a memorandum to presidents from the office of student affairs and special programs.

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### Appendices

There are no appendices relevant to this policy.