



May 2, 2024

University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graduate and Professional Students,

This Open Letter on Off-Campus Housing Support and Infrastructure at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville highlights significant concerns and areas of improvement regarding housing experiences on campus and in the surrounding areas. The findings from a recent survey conducted among graduate and professional students reveal both positive and negative sentiments that require the University's attention to foster a better living environment across our community.

A significant number of responses express dissatisfaction with various aspects of their rental experiences, including unreliable management, unexpected charges, maintenance issues, poor living conditions, and safety concerns. The frequency of these complaints suggests a prevalent issue with property management and maintenance standards across various complexes. Specifically, there is widespread dissatisfaction with management practices, including unresponsiveness, unexpected rent hikes, and a perceived focus on profit over tenant welfare. Participants reported that recent management changes have led to improvements in some cases, indicating that management quality heavily influences resident satisfaction. Complaints about pests, mold, and infrastructural decay were common. While some tenants note efficient maintenance responses, others report persistent issues that significantly impact their quality of life. Finally, many survey respondents expressed concerns over rising rental prices, leading to financial stress and dissatisfaction.

The housing experience and quality of living are pivotal components of the overall student experience, both on and off-campus. A safe and comfortable living environment directly impacts students' well-being and academic journey. Access to affordable, quality housing ensures that students can focus on their studies and actively engage in campus life, contributing to a vibrant and inclusive university community. Additionally, positive housing experiences foster a sense of belonging and promote mental and emotional wellness, which supports students in achieving their personal and professional goals.

Recognizing the significance of housing in shaping the student experience underscores the importance of institutions like the University of Tennessee Knoxville in providing adequate support and oversight to ensure that students have access to high-quality housing options that enhance their overall educational experience.

Some of the recommendations identified by members of the Graduate Students Senate and their constituents are the following:

1. **Provide Resources for Informed Decisions:** The University should offer comprehensive resources to students, especially out-of-state and international students, to make informed decisions about housing. This includes guidance on navigating local housing laws, understanding lease agreements, and identifying reputable housing options.

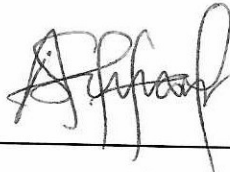
2. **Establish a Complaint Platform:** The University should create a dedicated platform or system for students to submit complaints and report predatory housing practices. This platform should be easily accessible and provide avenues for addressing issues promptly and effectively.
3. **Ensure Quality of Advertised Housing:** The University should take responsibility for ensuring the quality and legitimacy of housing options advertised during housing fairs or through university-affiliated platforms. This includes vetting landlords and properties to prevent predatory practices and misrepresentation.
4. **Support for International Students:** The University should recognize the unique challenges faced by international students in securing housing, such as documentation requirements and unfamiliarity with local housing norms. Offer specialized support services, including assistance with documentation, housing searches, and resolving housing-related issues post-arrival.
5. **Promote Transparency and Accountability:** The University should promote transparency in housing-related information provided to students, including clear guidelines on rental agreements, fees, and tenant rights. Hold landlords and housing providers accountable for ethical and fair practices, with mechanisms in place to address violations or complaints.
 - a. The University should hold landlords and housing providers accountable by removing or threatening to remove a property or property management company from the off-campus housing website and/or excluding them from housing fairs on campus until unethical practices are corrected.
6. **Educate and Empower Students:** The University should provide educational workshops, seminars, and resources on tenant rights, fair housing practices, and navigating housing markets to empower students to advocate for themselves and make informed choices.

By prioritizing these recommendations, we believe the university and the Office of Off-Campus Student Life can create a more inclusive off-campus housing environment that contributes positively to students' well-being, academic success, and overall satisfaction with their educational journey at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Thank you,

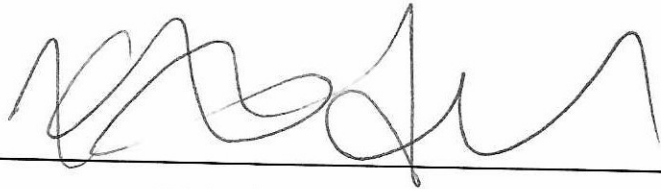
Graduate Student Senate

Adopted by the Graduate Student Senate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville on the second of May in the year two thousand and twenty-four.



Samuel Affar
Senate Chair

The Graduate Student Senate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, President, does hereby approve / [] refuse to approve this resolution.



Katherine Trubee
President

5/2/24

Date