

Graduate Student Senate



Graduate Student Senate, UNH Graduate School
Thompson Hall, 105 Main Street, Durham, NH 03824
Email: Grad.Student.Senate@unh.edu

The GSS President, Casey O'Heran, and the Housing and Transportation Committee submitted the following letter for the consideration of the Graduate Student Senate on 3/30/2020.

To: The University of New Hampshire Administration

The closure and subsequent demolition of Forest Park residences in 2019 significantly reduced the number of on-campus graduate and family housing units at the University of New Hampshire, leaving Babcock Hall as the only designated graduate housing on campus. The Graduate Student Senate recently learned that Babcock Hall could be shut down for renovation during the 2021-2022 academic year, which would displace the approximately 100 graduate students that reside there. We in GSS believe it is imperative that the university make plans to offer on-campus graduate student housing during the 2021-2022 academic year.

Housing is more than just a building offering shelter from the elements, though that function is important. One's housing situation, particularly in a university setting, can inspire community-building or impede it, can give a sense of individual belonging or strain it. Especially in trying times, like those we are currently navigating in the midst of a viral pandemic, housing is also a vital factor in individual and community health and safety. Even in otherwise typical times, the cost and location of housing can make or break an applicant's decision to attend a university, and will undoubtedly influence the daily experience of enrolled students. With the university's newly minted R1 status, maintaining enrollment of high caliber graduate students will have a major role in the continuation of that status, while availability of campus housing could play a major role in a graduate student's decision to attend the university. These are issues that are familiar to anyone working in Housing at UNH and elsewhere, and it is with these issues that this letter contends.

GSS is aware that the UNH administration is still in talks to develop graduate and family housing on a Main Street property in Durham, but given the timeline of completion for this project, and delays in implementation, we must consider the distinct possibility that the new housing will not be available for the 2021-2022 academic year. We are also aware that Housing is working to establish a pilot program in the Woodside residences that would hold 20 graduate students in the 2020-2021 academic year. However, this program on its own will not be nearly enough on-campus graduate housing, even in the short-term.

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With this letter we strongly urge the university to prepare a contingency plan for graduate housing that will get us through the current shortage. This situation also speaks to the broader issues of insufficient housing stock at UNH, and the high cost of housing in the surrounding markets. **Hence, GSS also strongly urges the university to create a comprehensive 5-year plan for how UNH will work towards offering sufficient, affordable, on-campus or campus-adjacent housing options to graduate students and their families.** As always, we are ready, willing, and able to contribute to these efforts and look forward to continuing our work with the administration.

Sincerely,
Graduate Student Senate

**This letter was approved by the Graduate Student Senate on 4/13/2020.*

Graduate Student Senate President

Casey O'Heran

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