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Look Who's Living on Campus

College administrators and housing directors regularly tout the benefits of on-campus living, in an effort to lure more students away from privately owned houses and apartment buildings. Many officials believe housing students on campus improves student life, and they are quick to cite studies that find these students are more likely to succeed academically. Despite these arguments, it used to be a struggle for some institutions to interest students in on-campus housing.

Now, in what some administrators see as a possible response to the recent downturn in the U.S. economy, some of these same institutions cannot keep up with the rising demand of upperclassmen who want to live on campus for a more practical purpose: to save money. While it is too early to tell whether the economy is to blame for this newfound demand, some campus administrators find that it exacerbates an already strained housing system.

This boom comes at a time when many colleges and universities are welcoming larger-than-average freshman classes, most of whom typically require housing. The challenge for these institutions then becomes which group of students to serve, underclassmen or upperclassmen. Anecdotally, institutions such as John Carroll, Bryant and Emory Universities, among others, are reporting that demand for on-campus housing exceed supply, and that most of the unanticipated requests are coming from juniors and seniors.

The rising tide of upperclassmen seeking to live in on-campus housing has caught the interest of the [Association of College & University Housing Officers-International](#). The organization discussed, as part of its annual 2008 conference held in Orlando this week, how to accommodate this growing demand. James Baumann, ACUHO-I's director of communications and marketing, said he and the organization's member institutions have taken note of the increase in upperclassmen living on campus. There is an attempt, he said, to balance occupancy among all students who desire space, regardless of their academic year, at institutions currently not equipped to meet this new demand.

Some colleges have even gone as far as offering financial incentives to freshmen who choose, for example, to live three to a double-occupancy room. This may be represented in an overall discount on annual room and board expenses. Additionally, others have had to convert previously common or storage areas into livable space.

Both are the case at [John Carroll University](#), in University Heights, Ohio, which has an undergraduate enrollment of about 3,000. For the first time in 10 years, John Carroll's residence halls are over capacity, according to Tonya Strong-Charles, director of media relations there. In particular, John Carroll has seen a stronger interest in on-campus housing for upperclassmen than in recent years. Almost 65 percent of the university's undergraduates live on campus, said Doreen Riley, vice president for university advancement, adding that she expects this number to grow as the university offers more housing. To explain the boom, Riley listed the everyday concerns of her students.

"Reasons we've heard from upperclassmen are cost and budgeting," Riley said, noting that the rising cost of off-campus living has brought some students back to campus. "With utilities, gas prices and rising food costs, by the time you pay rent, that's a lot of money."