

**ST. OLAF COLLEGE**

# H.O.M.E

Residential Focus Groups Discussions  
January Term 2025

  
**RESIDENCE LIFE**



# OVERVIEW

- Gathered Student Feedback across all Residence Halls.
    - January Term 2025 (1/14/25 - 1/28/25)
    - 86 participants (Avg: 8.6/hall)
  - Areas of Growth (per [Skyfactor 2024](#)):
    - Room Assignment **(S)**
    - Programming **(S)**
    - Student-staff Engagement **(S)**
    - Academic Success **(L)**
    - Social Connections and Interactions **(L)**
    - Knowledge Pertaining Substance Use **(L)**
- Additional Question**
- Potential Engagement Space (Ytterboe Residential Hub)



Hoyme Hall H.O.M.E Tabling  
Wednesday, 15th January 2025



# SATISFACTION

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# Room Assignments – What's Working



Many students  
satisfied with  
assignments &  
roommate pairings

10



Random  
assignment process  
praised for  
simplicity

5



Roommate survey  
sometimes led to  
strong matches

5

?

What influenced your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your original room assignment, and how could the process be improved to better meet your needs? (S)

# Room Assignments – Areas for Improvement



## CHALLENGES

Tech issues, misplacements, and inflexibility stressed some students. [4]



## LOFT KITS

Delays with loft kits, bed rails, etc. [2]



## UPDATES

Lack of updated room photos & unclear furniture dimensions. [7]



## LINKING

Online roommate linking process hard to navigate on mobile [2]

## Strategy Moving Forward

- Student-led Video Tour
- Clearer Email Communication
- Better Post-Assignment Support

# Programming – What Students Want



## Food-Themed Events (11)

(For e.g., Cereal Nights, Hot Chocolate, Food for Finals)



## Casual over Formal (8)

Low-pressure events (For e.g., Board Games, Tea Nights)



## Interactive Format (9)

(For e.g., Haunted Houses, Trivia, Talent Shows, Gaming Nights)



What types of programs or activities would you like to see more of in your residence hall, and what steps could be taken to encourage participation? (S)

# Programming – Key Improvements

2

Mix social with skill-based events (e.g., financial literacy)

4

Weekly recurring events build momentum

4

Encourage floor-to-floor interaction

3

Ideal times: 5–7 p.m. and late-night sessions (10–11 p.m.)

7

Communicate events via clear, timely emails & in-person reminders



# Student Staff Engagement – Strengths



Friendly greetings  
and consistent  
check-ins build  
belonging

10



SHCs praised for  
drawing residents  
to events

3



Positive  
relationships with  
approachable,  
visible RAs

9

?

What would you like your relationship with Residence Life live-in student staff (RAs, IAs, SHCs) to be, and what can they do to improve your sense of belonging? (S)



# Student Staff Engagement – Challenges & Ideas



## ENGAGEMENT

Some RAs not engaging  
or checking in regularly  
[5]

## POINT OF CONTACT



Unclear who to  
contact beyond the RA  
[3]



## FRONT DESK

Front desks often  
unstaffed late at night  
[2]

## Strategy Moving Forward

- Mandatory RA Check-ins at least Twice per Semester
- More Visible Presence in Common Areas
- Balance Friendliness with Rule Enforcement

Ellingson Hall Focus Group  
Friday, 24th January 2025



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# LEARNING

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# Academic Success – Student Needs

5

Posters on resources, strategies, and emergency info.

3

Rolling whiteboards, printers, and supplies

7

Better study spaces (quiet, enclosed, well-lit)

9

Study hall events & peer mentoring

?

What changes or initiatives could be implemented in the residential experience to better support your academic success? (L)

# Academic Success – Emotional & Social Support



Roommate dynamics strongly affect academic well-being

2



Stress relief (especially during finals) is vital

2



RA-hosted quiet study breaks and emotional wellness nights appreciated

4

?

What changes or initiatives could be implemented in the residential experience to better support your academic success? (L)



# Social Interaction – Key Challenges

Difficulty meeting new people over time [2]

Physical distance between residence halls [2]

Isolation in living situations (Freshmen placed in upperclassmen dorms, living on quieter floors etc) [3]

Friendships changed over time [4]  
SOAR groups lost significance as the year progressed



What challenges have you faced in meeting new people, and what kinds of initiatives would help you connect with others or enhance your existing connections? (L)

# Conflict Resolution – What Students Need



Roommate agreements & surveys help set early boundaries [5]



RAs are trusted for mediation but response consistency varies [10]



## What Residents Want:

- Tools to resolve issues independently (before RA involvement) - 7
- Visible escalation pathways (e.g., when to contact ACs) - 5

## Common Areas of Conflicts



Laundry (3)



Noise (4)



Shared Space (6)

## Suggested Strategy

- Posters with proactive strategies & contact info
- Anonymous RA mediation options for shared areas
- Easy RA appointment tools (e.g., Calendar links)
- More floor bonding to reduce conflict risk



What specific resources or programs would help you feel confident in resolving conflicts? (L)

# Substance Use – Student Concerns & Ideas

## Challenges faced by Residents



Some students fear seeking help due to policy enforcement. **(5)**



Confusion about Medical Amnesty undermines trust. **(6)**



Do you have concerns about alcohol or drug use in the residence halls? What programs could raise awareness of the risks? (L)



## What Residents Want:

- Clear, consistent messaging on emergency safety policies **(7)**
- Harm-reduction education, not just abstinence **(8)**

## Suggested Tools & Program

- Fridge magnets, rotating posters, QR codes with emergency info
- Narcan training, alcohol poisoning seminars, social safety tips
- Public Safety & RA staff training for supportive response

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# ADDITIONAL QUESTION

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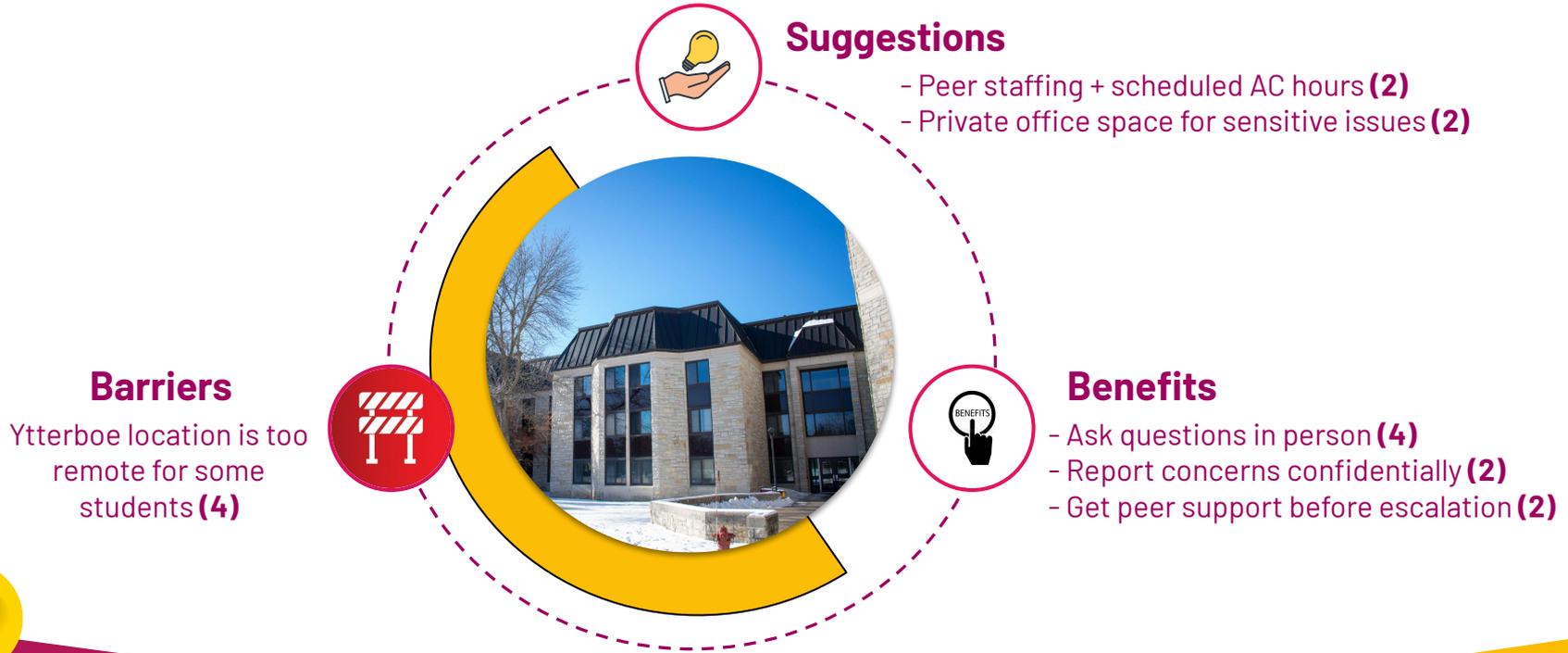
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Mohn Hall Focus Group  
Thursday, 23rd January 2025



# Engagement Space - Ytterboe Residential Hub



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Would you visit Ytterboe Hall if an intentional student engagement space were created for you to utilize in support of your on-campus living experiences?



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# OVERALL STRATEGIES

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# Strategies Moving Forward...

Improve Event  
Communication &  
Consistency



Student-focused  
Programming



Supportive Academic  
Environments



Promote Belonging &  
Social Connections



Enhance Room-Assignment  
Experience



Mental Health &  
Wellness



Maintain  
Feedback Loops





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# DISCUSSION TIME!

H.O.M.E Approach (January Term 2025)

  
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