



Note: *The trustees in attendance at the March 2nd Student Perspectives Series meeting were Tom Cole, Dave Coolidge and Steve Stevanovich.*

March 6, 2017

To: University of Chicago Graduate Student Body

From: The Student Perspectives Series Graduate Committee

- Megan Beck, Graduate Liaison to the Board of Trustees (Booth '17)
- Renita Ward (Divinity '18)
- Nick Williams (PSD '18)

RE: Summary Materials from March 2nd Student Perspective Series Meeting on Graduate Housing

"Too many of our students, when they leave the classroom, the library, or the laboratory, leave the real atmosphere of the University... We must bring together the great majority of our students, graduate and undergraduate, in comfortable and attractive residence halls, with common rooms, dining-halls, recreation space, and headquarters for student organizations. Until this is done it will be impossible to achieve the social solidarity and esprit de corps which are essential to the carrying out of a well-rounded educational program."

- Excerpt from John Boyer's "The Kind of University We Desire to Become"

Summary:

On March 2, 2017, we met with members of the Board of Trustees as part of the Student Perspectives Series quarterly meetings to discuss the issue of graduate student housing at the University of Chicago. Student housing can be broadly defined to include issues of shelter, safety, transportation, retail and dining, and community. While there is a concerted long-term vision for undergraduate student housing at the University of Chicago, the same does not seem to be true for graduate housing. As the university has moved to sell-off graduate student properties and remove graduate student space in places like International House, the graduate community is becoming increasingly concerned with the quality, availability, and affordability of options in the Hyde Park community. Such issues are causing an increasing number of graduate students to consider options further and further away from the university campus and is negatively impacting the sense of community students feel during their time here.

Prompts for Discussion:

- **Strategic Planning:** There seems to be long-term strategic planning around undergraduate housing and the role of the university in fostering and developing a strong, residence-based undergraduate community. To what extent is this being thought about at the graduate level?
 - More discussion should be had at the board level around the issue of graduate student housing to to inform planning and decisions by the University around graduate student life.
 - Of note is the fact that many peer institutions offer significantly greater university-run housing. Are there reasons UChicago should have the same or different approach here?
 - There are segments of students who are particularly impacted by graduate student housing concerns. These include international students who are sometimes unable to visit campus before starting their program and families who may have a harder time finding housing.
- **The Role of the University:** John Boyer wrote clearly in a 2008 essay on the role of the university in promoting the undergraduate residential experience as a part of the overall educational experience at UChicago. Should the university be doing more on the issues of graduate housing and community-building? What is the role of the university on this topic? What are the long-term implications of failing to act on this topic? How should the university engage with the city of Chicago when approaching topics around housing and the Hyde Park community?
- **Actionable Next Steps:** What are some realistic steps the board can take to stimulate high-level thought leadership and strategic planning around graduate housing? How does a strategic plan for graduate housing fit with existing development initiatives and goals? How can students and administrators be more impactful with regard to student housing?
 - For the Board:
 - The board should think more strategically about the issue of graduate housing and how the university can more adequately meet the needs of graduate students, particularly those who are in their first year.
 - Outside the Board:
 - The Liaison to the Board of Trustees will work in conjunction with Graduate Council to work on more tactical issues surrounding graduate student housing and community life. This will include working to create a new Committee on Graduate Life within Graduate Council to help foster a greater sense of cross-divisional community life.
 - The Liaison to the Board of Trustees will work in conjunction with Graduate Council and UChicagoGRAD to improve resources on the graduate housing website based on student survey feedback.
 - Administrators should commission a professional survey of the graduate student body to have better, more statistically significant data on graduate student experience, particularly as it relates to the broadly defined issue of graduate housing.

Appendix

Exhibit 1: Summary Graduate Student Survey Results

The information below comes from a survey that was circulated among the divisions in January 2017. There were approximately 150 responses representing 11 divisions (no responses were received from Graham students).

Theme	Anecdotal Evidence
There are clear differences in experiences across divisions but housing does not tend to be a factor when students are deciding to come to UChicago.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadly speaking, professional students tend to view graduate housing as much less of an issue than other graduate students Most students noted that the student housing was not a factor in their decision to attend UChicago, but some wished they had known more about the issue <i>"The non-existence of affordable, quality student housing would have been a deal breaker for me when I was deciding on UChicago for medical school. Watching the sale of dozens of buildings over the past two years makes me feel misled and as though the university doesn't really care about their students or their ability to focus on school without worrying constantly about housing."</i>
The recent sale of university-owned buildings to private management companies has negatively impacted graduate students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students feel strongly that 1-2 property management companies have developed something of a monopoly Students have experienced rent hikes of 20-30% (from \$200-\$500) following the sale of their buildings; many were also forced to leave at the end of their leases even if they wanted to stay This type of increase is causing students to start looking completely outside of Hyde Park into other neighborhoods <i>"My experience with graduate housing was wonderful before the university sold the building I live in"</i> International students and students with families feel these problems particularly acutely
Affordable housing in Hyde Park (both university-owned and privately owned) often comes with major trade-offs around quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many students mentioned problems with mice, cockroaches, centipedes, and other insects Maintenance is generally quite poor; students reported having problems associated with leaky water or broken kitchen appliances that went on for more than a week
Safety continues to be the major concern for students living in Hyde Park, and many feel the problem is getting worse and lacks appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students noted that there is a general feeling that crime reporting from the university (in the form of safety alerts) is not accurate and lacks transparency Many students commented on the desire for expanded UCPD zones, but locations were inconsistent (East Hyde

transparency.	Park, the southern border of campus, and further north were all specifically called out)
Students find transportation resources to be closely tied to their personal safety in Hyde Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students commented positively about the university shuttle system but mentioned that the discontinuation of the door-to-door shuttle service has made them feel less safe <i>"The shuttle drops off a few blocks from my apartment and I have to walk alone in the dark on a quiet street. Often I find myself so panicked about being followed that I just sprint to my door to minimize the chances of getting mugged. It's emotionally draining and I wish there were better resources to help with this. I was previously a student in New Haven and the school offered door-to-door shuttle services at night to address this concern."</i>
Recent improvements to retail and dining options in Hyde Park have improved quality of life, but challenges remain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While there are more options with the recent expansion of 53rd street businesses, graduate students still struggle with the short hours of retailers like grocery stores and getting home from retail locations safely after dark
Issues relating to graduate housing and community are contributing to the already stressful life of graduate students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volatility in the graduate housing situation is leading students to move often which is a significant stressor <i>"Feeling insecure about my living situation isn't something I expected as a medical student at UChicago, but that's been my experience."</i> <i>"It's awful watching the university sell off buildings and wondering if mine will be next."</i> <i>"It's difficult to find friends as a graduate student here, and I think more cooperative housing options that bring together students from different divisions would be beneficial."</i> <i>"I just want an affordable apartment with a thermostat and no bugs, but it's really difficult to find one, even though that seems like a reasonable minimum standard."</i>

Exhibit 2: Graduate Housing Initiatives at Peer Institutions

Institution	Details
Harvard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers its 15,250 graduate and professional students the option to apply through the University for both on campus dorm and off campus apartment options; 2007 strategic plan available online Self-contained online housing application process and portal for all things housing-related easily accessible Comprehensive community-building programs for residents offered; programmatic details available online

Northwestern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily accessible online housing application, with priority for graduate students with families • Offers three on-campus graduate apartment buildings totaling over 500 units, one is designated for Kellogg students • Thorough directory of information about housing in Evanston and Chicago, including information on building community while living off-campus through the Office of Off-Campus Life • Dedicated online portal for international students to find housing on- and off-campus
Penn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-campus housing available at graduate high-rise community for over 500 students. No children permitted. • Live, online, interactive info sessions about graduate housing options and living in Philadelphia • Housing listings and graduate housing information guide available through the Office of Off-Campus Services
Princeton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate housing available for almost 70% of graduate students • Priority given to new students • Options include dormitory housing for students without dependents, unfurnished apartments for students with families, and spots as resident graduate students for students who wish to live and participate in the undergraduate colleges
Stanford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate housing covered in the 30-year strategic capital plan • New graduate housing set to open in 2017 that will provide on-campus housing for nearly 70% of graduate students • \$937M project is the largest single capital project in the school's history
Yale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers its 6,859 graduate and professional students the option to apply for both on campus and off campus housing options • Housing websites provides guidance on seeking long term versus short term housing through the University • Housing organization committed to fostering & building community through calendared programming