



Cornell University Student Assembly

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Type of Action:	Legislation
Status/Result:	New Business

S.A. Resolution #26

Promoting Justice and Friendship in the Housing Lottery

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4 ABSTRACT: This resolution changes the order in which students receive their time-slots and pick their
5 blocking unit and creates a two-part lottery system to guarantee that students can live with their friends,
6 reduce politicking, and give more time to freshmen to select blocking units.
7

8 Sponsored by: Gabriel Kaufman '18
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10 Whereas, according to Article III, Section 1 of the Student Assembly Charter, “the Student Assembly has
11 *legislative authority* over the policies of the Division of Campus Life” and thus by extension the
12 Office of Residential and Event Services (ORES) therein;
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14 Whereas, the Student Assembly has exercised this authority in the past, such as when the Student
15 Assembly passed (AY 2012-2013) Resolution #12: “Adoption of a Gender Inclusive Housing
16 Policy” and (AY 2009- 2010) Resolution #13: “Housing Lottery Time Slots;”
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18 Whereas, the Student Assembly has a compelling interest in reviewing the distribution pattern of the
19 living arrangements of students throughout the campus;
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21 Whereas, the Office of Residential and Event Services manages the housing lottery to which this
22 resolution refers in the following clauses;
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24 Whereas, the housing lottery is the primary means by which returning students obtain residence and thus
25 defines the aforementioned distribution pattern;
26

27 Whereas, in the current housing lottery system, students receive time-slots *before* they decide who will
28 comprise their blocking unit of no more than four other students (five students per blocking unit)
29 and those time-slots are allocated randomly to students by class year;
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31 Whereas, this system results in a random group of students (those receiving early time-slots) with the
32 ability to decide *both where and with whom they will live*;
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34 Whereas, such a system allows a student with the better time-slot to exercise complete power over the
35 composition of his or her blocking unit, creating an unfair and unequal dynamic among students
36 who do have early time slots and those who do not;
37

38 Whereas, allocating the time-slots before the students choose their blocking unit partners creates a
39 perverse incentive for students to choose *with whom* they will live as a function of *where* they
40 will live, which makes building friendly communities more difficult as those blocking units are
41 chosen not based on the inherent qualities of the students, but on the prospect of receiving better
42 housing;
43

44 Whereas, that incentive is removed if participants cannot choose based off another participant's time-slot;
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46 Whereas, a housing lottery system where students choose with whom they will live before they know

47 where they will live will incentivize students to choose blocking unit partners based only off the
48 value of their friendship (or their compatibility as roommates);
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50 Whereas, such a system which allows students to pool their chances of getting a better time-slot by
51 blocking with other students increases the blocking unit's chance to get better housing
52 proportionally to the number of students in the block (e.g, giving a blocking unit of x number of
53 students x time slots and assigning the blocking unit the best one);
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55 Whereas, such a system would be fair for large, medium, and small blocking units as larger blocking units
56 would be more likely to get better time-slots but smaller blocking units would have more
57 available blocks from which to choose;
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59 Whereas, the Office of Residential and Event Services would be able to adjust the probability that a
60 blocking unit with x number of participants receive a time-slot sufficient to obtain favorable
61 housing such that there is no advantage to having a larger block,
62

63 Whereas, such as system would give participants far more time to decide who will be in their blocking
64 unit as they would not have to wait for the assignment of the time slot in February to think about
65 who they will block with;
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67 Whereas, a housing lottery system incorporating all of these features can be created by changing the order
68 of assigning the time-slot and choosing with whom to block, and by switching to a two-part
69 housing lottery outlined in the following clauses;
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71 Be it therefore resolved, that the Office of Residential and Event Services change the order in which
72 participants receive their time slots and decide with whom to block, such that participants choose
73 their blocking unit and then, after submitting the blocking unit, collectively receive a time slot to
74 select their residential community (in most cases a building, such as Becker House or Cascadilla
75 Hall), and then, once they have selected their residential community (defined at the discretion of
76 the Office of Residential and Event Services), the residential community shall conduct a second
77 internal lottery with the same group with new timeslots to determine the order in which blocking
78 units select their rooms;
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80 Be it further resolved, that the capacity of residential communities would be determined according to the
81 total number of beds available in a residential community instead of based on individual rooms or
82 blocks;
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84 Be it further resolved, that blocking units *may not break up until there are no suitable blocks remaining in their*
85 *residential community capable of fitting that blocking unit*, as this guarantees that blocking unit members are
86 able to live in the same residential community as their block mates even in the event that in the
87 internal lottery, all of the members are not able to block together;
88

89 Be it further resolved, that in the individual residential community lotteries (the second lottery), blocking
90 units would collectively receive a new time slot for which to choose their specific living arrangements
91 in the residential community;
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93 Be it further resolved, that if blocks do break up, the students in those blocks would be able to block in any
94 available rooms in the residential community during the time-slot their blocking unit received

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96 Be it further resolved, that in the first lottery, blocking units collectively receive the best time-slot of the
97 time-slots that any of the participants would have received under the current system;
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99 Be it further resolved, that the Office of Residential and Event Services have otherwise broad discretion
100 in implementing this policy change to take into account the nuances of the system;
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102 Be it finally resolved, that the Office of Residential and Event Services report to the Student Assembly
103 before the conclusion of the 2016 Spring Semester to give an update on ORES's progress in
104 implementing the change.
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107 Respectfully Submitted,
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109 Gabriel Kaufman '18
110 *Undesignated At-Large, Student Assembly*
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112 Christian Welling '17
113 *Residential Student Congress Liason*
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115 Erinn Liu '18
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127 *(Reviewed by: Residential Life Committee, DATE)*
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