

Affordable Employee Housing Project

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	
Problem Statement	2
Description of Project	2
Summary of Recommendations	2
Introduction	3
Statement of Need	3
Project Goals	3
Background Research	3
Methodology	4
Interview Questions	4
Results	5
Recommendations	5
Funding	5
Land	6
Cost of Living	6
Who Built it	6
Sustainability	7
Type of Housing	7
Affordability/Eligibility	7
Additional Recommendations	8
Monitoring and Evaluation	8
Budget	9
Conclusion	10
Appendix	11

References 19

Executive Summary

Problem Statement:

Western Washington University currently has no plan, or infrastructure in place to secure housing for university staff and faculty. The housing options in Bellingham are incredibly limited. The lack of housing is causing a steep increase in market price. This makes housing inaccessible to faculty and staff who earn working class wages. Staff and faculty are spending substantial portions of their paychecks to make rent or cover their mortgage. Some are forced to reside further from campus where rates are cheaper, which increases the university's overall greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, there is a fear that prospective employees are turning down job offers because the cost of living is too expensive. This limits the diversity, inclusivity, and representation that Western can offer. If Western hopes to attract a wider array of employees this is an issue administration will have to address.

Description of Project:

This project aims to create sustainable and affordable housing for faculty and staff at Western to create an environment conducive to maintaining quality employees. The focus for this project was to conduct research to create an inventory of faculty and staff housing programs from other universities. The recommendations for Westerns affordable faculty and staff housing programs are based on successful strategies and programs other universities have implemented. This data was gathered through phone interviews. In these interviews the questions revolve around the cost of construction and living, sustainability considerations, affordability and where the land came from, among others. A table has been constructed showing the collected information. One school has been selected for each criteria deemed as the 'best practice'. Best practices were determined based on what was seen as the most effective strategy for Western to overcome possible roadblocks. The constructed list of best practices will go forward to the project stakeholders to propose to university administration. In later quarters students will be surveying faculty and staff, looking for funding, locations and design elements to create both affordable and sustainable housing options.

Summary of Recommendations:

The recommendations for this project include a partnership with Kulshan Land Trust and rent-geared-to-income housing support programs. Additionally, student involvement in the design and construction of the homes as well as ambitious sustainability efforts. And finally, a range of housing styles close enough to campus to reduce the need to drive. It is also recommended that Western send delegates to the Council for Academic Workforce Housing in the Spring of 2020 to network with other universities making strides towards sustainable and affordable employee housing.

Introduction

Statement of Need:

This project addresses the high cost of living in Bellingham causing capable professors and staff to seek work elsewhere or commute long distances to work. The project is intended to address faculty retention as well as increase campus sustainability. Building affordable housing close to campus is an important step to reducing the carbon footprint of the university. Specifically, this project looked at design elements and affordability measures of faculty housing at other universities to provide recommendations for Western. Building affordable employee housing at Western is dependent upon administration recognizing the need and allocating the funding and physical space for construction to begin.

Project Goals:

The overarching goal is providing faculty and staff with affordable housing that is close to campus. As the cost of living in Bellingham rises, it is more important than ever to provide housing opportunities to employees to insure the highest quality education possible for students. By providing faculty and staff housing options close to campus, Western has the chance to decrease carbon emissions from driving to campus as well as providing staff with housing security. The end goal is to construct sustainable and affordable housing with options to rent and buy for faculty and staff. For this quarter specifically the goal was to conduct research on other universities who currently have employee housing and record the data in a table on the established criteria.

Background Research:

This project began in Fall of 2018, the students involved with the project conducted research supporting why Western needs a housing action plan (Sturdy et al., 2018). Their research shows that there are three main reasons why Western needs to develop affordable and sustainable housing: faculty retention, sustainability, and the high cost/low quantity of housing. Bellingham vacancy rates are currently less than 3% (Bellingham Washington Residential Rent and Rental Statistics, n.d.). Low vacancy leads to an increase in housing cost, in the last year alone rates have risen by 12.5% (Bellingham Washington Residential Rent and Rental Statistics, n.d.). It is steadily becoming more difficult to afford quality housing in Bellingham. Based on an article written in 2018 by the Western Front 56% of Western faculty and staff cannot afford the average annual housing cost of living (Fletcher, 2018). Being able to offer housing assistance to new and current employees would make Western more attractive to prospective applicants and help ensure that current employees do not leave Western for financial reasons. This project is geared towards tenured faculty, non-tenure faculty, and staff. 'Faculty' refers to professors and instructors and 'staff' encompasses all non-faculty, non-student campus employees. This project

would help Western compete with the benefits offered at top universities and attract more applicants to the campus. In the past project a survey of Western faculty and staff found that half of respondents commute to campus by car (Sturdy et al., 2018). These carbon emissions could be severely reduced if housing was offered to employees within walking, busing, or biking distance of campus. Providing housing opportunities close to campus as well as shopping centers and entertainment can reduce the overall emissions of the area dramatically (Sturdy et al., 2018). Additionally, many faculty and staff homes lack ambitious sustainability goals and utilize land and resources inefficiently. If employee housing were to be constructed, these inefficiencies would be addressed and set an example for sustainable construction in the future.

Methodology

To obtain data for this project interviews were conducted. This was the best way to collect meaningful information for this project. These interviews provided insight as to how other universities have put staff and faculty housing programs into action. From this data, best practices were selected so Western administration would be provided with a clear path forward. By speaking with faculty involved with the projects at different universities it displayed the numerous ways these programs have come to fruition. Additionally, learning about major barriers that their projects faced allows for Western to hopefully bypass those roadblocks.

Phone interviews and in depth research were conducted with nine universities that have affordable housing available to their staff and faculty. These universities are: University of British Columbia, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC San Diego, Penn State, University of Hawaii, Stanford and University of Toronto. The seven criteria seen as the major barriers for Western that they would need help addressing were identified as: funding, land used, cost of living, who built it, how are they addressing sustainability, type of housing available, and affordability/eligibility programs. Information regarding these criteria were guided by the questions below.

Interview Questions:

- 1. Funding: How was the project financed? What was the cost?
- 2. Land Use: Where did the land come from? Was it previously owned by the university? And how far from campus is it located?
- 3. Cost of Living: Is there a fixed price on the unit? What percentage of the average income is it? Is it a rental or a lease? How is the rental rate determined? Is it a fixed rate regardless of income, or is it tied to income in some way? Are units owned by the occupant or the university?

- 4. Who built it? Was it a private party? Cooperative/partner effort? Or entirely the university? Was it a private/public partnership, or did the university finance it alone? How was the private sector involved?
- 5. What sustainability considerations are being made? Is it a net zero building? Is it equipped with solar panels? Does it have a LEAD Certification? Etc.
- 6. What type of housing is being used? Is the facility comprised of apartments? Town homes? Single family houses? How many units are there?
- 7. What kind of affordability/eligibility plans/programs are in place? Is there a mortgage assistance program? How does it stay affordable to faculty? How does it ensured that the housing is kept for the use of faculty?

The data collected from these questions is compiled into a methodical inventory. The data is presented in a table which highlights the best paths that different institutions have taken to provide affordable housing options for their employees.

Results

The results were compiled into seven tables, one for each criterion. The tables can be found in the appendix.

Recommendations

Funding:

UC Irvine had the best procedure for how to finance their project. The Irvine Campus Housing Authority referred to as the ICHA, was set up as a separate nonprofit entity from the University (Irvine Campus Housing Authority, n.d.). It was created by the University administration to develop and maintain the proposed employee housing. Being separate from the University allowed the ICHA to take out private lending loans to build the housing units (Lachman, 2019). UC Irvine found that the loans associated with the cost of construction were paid off within the first year from the rental payments (Lachman, 2019). There are not exact costs associated with this project because of its scope. Despite this, working with a separate entity is the best way to go about financing this project at Western. (See Table 1).

Land:

The University of British Columbia employee housing is built and owned by UBC Properties Trust. The goal of the Trust is to assist UBC through the optimization of land assets (UBC Properties Trust, n.d). This model works extremely well for UBC, because the university does not have to worry about developing and maintaining the properties. As mentioned in the

previous section working with a separate entity is the best idea. Based on this is recommended the university should partner with the Kulshan Community Land Trust in Whatcom county. The Kulshan Community Land Trust focuses on affordable homeownership (Kulshan Community Land Trust, n.d.). They offer financial support to community members and promote ecologically sound and sustainable land use. Their mission aligns with the goals of this project making them a crucial partner in the progress of this housing program. (See Table 2).

Cost of Living:

Most of the universities interviewed offer some reduction in rent from the market rate. UBC's plan is far superior to the structure of any other university researched. On top of offering reduced rental costs for everyone in the villages, at a 25% reduction from market, they also offer different affordability programs. Their first is a staff rent-geared-to-income program. As it says in the title this program is only for university staff, not faculty. Staff who are a part of this program have their rent capped at 30% of their household income (Murphy, 2019). Their next program is targeted towards new faculty, named Faculty Temporary Housing Support. This program is similar to the previous in that rent is capped at 30% of household income but this program is limited for only the first two years of employment. This allows new faculty to accrue wealth and get their footing in a new area (Faculty / Staff Housing Support Programs, n.d.). Their last program is geared towards faculty homeownership. They offer down payment assistance and prescribed interest rate loans to help faculty purchase their own homes (Faculty/Staff Housing Support Programs, n.d.). Following UBC's lead would best set up Western to financially support staff and faculty secure housing. (See Table 3).

Who Built it:

The UC Davis homes were built through a partnership with Honda. Honda was looking to expand their new sustainability branch by building a zero energy home. Honda has a long standing relationship with UC Davis's automobile department. Additionally, they learned that UC Davis had recently bought 60 acres of land for faculty and staff home development which made the two an excellent match. UC Davis students worked with Honda to develop sustainability measures for the house and are assisting in monitoring the energy inputs/outputs. It is suggested that Western explore the idea of working with a corporate sponsor to build the proposed faculty and staff housing. Furthermore, Western should utilize the knowledge and skills of students on campus to assist in the design of these houses. From the Urban Planning program to the Institute for Energy Studies there many students on campus who could contribute greatly to this project. (See Table 4).

Sustainability:

The sustainability principles implemented in faculty housing are best exemplified by the University of Washington's Alder Hall, and UC Davis's Smart Homes. Each of these projects have different sustainability traits which WWU can implement. The University of Washington's Alder Hall achieved a LEED Gold Certification through simple improvements on the inside of the building. These include monitoring energy usage through a dashboard kiosk in the main lobby, a low energy heat recovery system, high efficiency boilers, dynamic thermostats, and lighting and appliances they have high energy star ratings. UC Davis' smart homes are set to be net zero in the near future, and include solar panels, geothermal heating cooling, extensive use of recycled materials as well as sustainably harvested wood. This combination of internal and external factors used at UW and UC Davis respectively would create extremely sustainable homes but also quality living environments. (See Table 5).

Type of Housing:

Many of the housing options offered by the universities were very similar but the facilities offered at UC Irvine surpassed the others. Their units are located on 300 acres of land within walking distance from shopping, restaurants, the beach, and entertainment (Irvine Campus Housing Authority, n.d.). The home are also all within a mile from campus. Within the community there are 14 parks, access to bus lines, biking trails, pools, picnic shelters, and much more. They offer a wide array of housing options to their occupants. They have four apartment communities, two condominiums, paired homes, townhomes, single family homes, and a few custom built homes (Irvine Campus Housing Authority, n.d.). There are a total of 1,482 households, 1,122 of them are for sale homes and the other 360 are rental units (Lachman, 2019). While this far surpasses what is possible for Western in the near future it is a great model for the direction that the university should be headed. (See Table 6).

Affordability/Eligibility:

The University of British Columbia has a unique model to help ensure that rent remains affordable to the employees in their families. The University owns land that they lease out to different subcontractors. The rent made from leasing to external entities is not kept for profit, rather it is used to help ensure that rent stays reduced by at least 25% of the market for university employees (Murphy, 2019). If this strategy were to be used at Western it could be extremely successful. When Western purchases land for the new construction they could buy additional land with this concept in mind. (See Table 7).

Additional Recommendations:

The Council for Academic Workforce Housing is a collection of nonprofits, foundations, and university departments focused around providing university employee housing. The council

provides a forum of education and best practices in the university housing realm (CAWH, n.d). The conference is held each spring at a university with an impressive employee housing program. Attendees share expertise, information, and strategies on their organization's program. The universities at the forefront of employee housing are all part of this foundation. This could be an incredible opportunity to learn and develop Western's housing program. Sending a student and/or stakeholder to this conference in spring 2020 would be a huge step in pushing the progress of this project forward.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The success of this project can be measured on how well it is continued through the coming quarters and years. To see continuous progress students and stakeholders should do their best to follow the timeline below (Table 8) to keep the project on track. Once the housing is constructed, the goals can be monitored and evaluated to look for changes in faculty retention and employee transportation methods. These evaluations can occur through regular surveying and interviewing of occupants. Through these methods the university should be able to quantify and measure the success of the project.

Fall 2019	 Survey administered by students is made to see what Employees/Faculty would look for in this kind of housing project. Information gathered into report.
Winter 2020	Funding Sources are looked at for the project by students. Information is gathered into report.
Spring 2020	 Possible Designs are drafted. These designs include CAD models, and hand sketches. Attend the Council for Academic Workforce Housing Conference
Fall 2020	Another survey is given using the design drafts. Appropriate changes are made using survey results.
Winter 2021	Final Plan is assembled and present to Western, including all previous research and designs.
Spring 2021	University begins project by purchasing or allocating land and starts construction.

Fall 2021	+
Beyond	

• University implements programs within the newly built project which monitor and evaluate how the goals of reducing commuting, increasing employee retention and occupancy levels.

Table 8. Project Timeline Fall 2019-Spring 2021

Budget

The budget will be highly dependent on the space allocated by the university. The projects researched have ranged from hundreds of thousands of dollars to tens of millions of dollars. At this time it is difficult to construct a budget based on the information gathered but there are some budgetary items to consider. These items are the cost of land, cost of design, cost of construction, and ongoing upkeep costs. Down the line the cost of these items will be addressed.

Conclusion

It is clear that employee housing is a necessary project for Western to begin. The need for housing is immediate and if the university hopes to gain and maintain quality faculty, steps towards construction must begin soon. The land for this project would come from a partnership with the Kulshan Land Trust so the university does not have to focus on developing and maintaining the properties. Western may choose to look for a private partnership for construction and would utilize the knowledge and skill of students when considering design. The cost of building would come from private loans taken out by an established non-profit Housing Authority, so the return would be fairly quick. Both internal and external sustainability measures will be made to work towards net zero energy. Constructing LEED Gold homes would provide tax breaks for Western as well as the many other sustainability measures that will improve the quality of the environment (Tax Credits & LEED Points, n.d.). The type of housing should include a wide range including apartments, condominiums, paired homes, townhomes and single family homes with options to rent as well as buy. Additionally, the homes should be near campus and bus lines as well as parks, shopping and restaurants to reduce the need to drive not only to campus but to other attractions. It is recommended that the university leases additional land to subcontractors in an effort to keep employee housing reduced by 25% to insure affordability. To offer additional support for university staff, Western should cap the cost of rent at 30% of household income to offset their wages compared to tenured faculty. New faculty should also have this available for their first 2 years at Western to gain financial footing.

It is recommended that Steve Hollenhorst, project sponsor, ensure that this information is given to the next Campus Sustainability Planning Studio course who can continue to follow the project timeline. This would include research into possible sources of funding, potential buildings sites both on and off campus, and once the sites are located, beginning to draft some designs of what this type of housing may look like. The students could also inform their design and site location for the project with a survey administered to faculty and staff to see what kind

of interests they would have in this type of project. This project speaks to the larger sustainability and equity projects at Western through a direct investment in the retention of faculty and staff by providing them with close and affordable housing, as well as reducing the overall carbon footprint generated by Western. If Western intends to be seen as a leader in sustainability, the administration must acknowledge and support the success of sustainable and affordable faculty and staff housing

Appendix

	Funding - Table 1
UC Davis ¹	-\$80 million
Stanford ²	-\$176.5 million
UC San Diego ³	-Preexisting structures
University of British Columbia ⁴	-Too hard to say, lots of buildings were already standing and it has so many different aspects that there is no real estimate that they could provide
University of Hawaii ⁵	- \$20 - 30 million dollars to construct all three properties
UC Irvine ⁶	-Nonprofit took out private lending loans to build and paid back when properties were sold (within one year payback)
Rutgers University ⁷	-Unavailable
University of Toronto ⁸	-University acquired and owned century homes -Both programs are administered by the University's Residential Housing Ancillary and operate on a cost recovery basis with no subsidies
University of Washington 9	-Alder Hall, UW - \$50,686,696

	Land - Table 2
UC Davis 1	-UC Davis bought back 60 acres that was being used commercially
Stanford ²	-Made possible through the 2005 Mayfield Development agreement between the City of Palo Alto and Stanford University to secure land
UC San Diego ³	-Rental Program houses and apartments purchased as is -Buying Program houses are pre existing within 50 miles of campus
University of British Columbia ⁴	-UBC Properties Trust -Some buildings were already standing and converted into staff and faculty housing -1.2 km from campus
University of Hawaii ⁵	 Three different housing properties The land was owned by the state of Hawaii and deeded to the University Within a mile from campus
UC Irvine ⁶	-Land belongs to UC California land village -They lease the land to the nonprofit who subleases the 350 acres to staff and faculty -Employees buy their homes but lease the land -Furthest building is one mile from campus
Rutgers University ⁷	-Johnson Apartments previously owned by University -The Vue, and Highland Montgomery are both private endeavors on private land off university property
University of Toronto ⁸	-The housing is located on St George campus -The land and housing were bought by the University
University of Washington 9	-Previous UW Campus housing was on the property, it built in the the 1920s and demolished in 2010 for the new dorm to be built

	Cost of Living - Table 3
UC Davis ¹	-80 percent of the cost of comparable Davis homes -\$579,000 median home price
Stanford ²	-Single family homes cost around \$1.9 million -Condos cost between \$836,000-\$998,000
UC San Diego ³	-Rental rates are comparable to those in the UC San Diego area, no apparent efforts to lower the cost
University of British Columbia ⁴	Three main types of programs: -Staff rent-geared-to-income (rent capped at 30% of household income) -Faculty temporary housing support (provides housing for new faculty capped at 30% of household income for 2 years) -Faculty homeownership program (Down payment assistance, and prescribed interest rate loans) -On average rent is \$2.40 per square foot
University of Hawaii ⁵	-The cost of living varies by unit -Renters pay anywhere from 50-80% of market price
UC Irvine ⁶	-Attempt to remain slightly under surrounding rents (they work with the surrounding Irvine company to keep their rents 5-10% below market)
Rutgers University 7	-From a price comparison to private listings close to the university, rental pricing is similar to units which are not fully furnished and equipped like the Rutgers housing
University of Toronto ⁸	-Tenants Salary is not known, so the university doesn't know what percentage it is -Rental rate determined on a number of factors- eg size, amenities -Rent is a fixed rate, not tied to income in any way -Units are owned by the university
University of Washington ⁹	-Single: \$3,448/quarter, Double: \$2,876/quarter Triple:\$2,309/quarter in 2016

	Who Built It - Table 4
UC Davis ¹	-Honda Smart Home with influence from UC Davis research
Stanford ²	-Stanford
UC San Diego ³	-Preexisting structures
University of British Columbia ⁴	- UBC Properties Trust -Members of the Board of Directors govern the operations of the UBC Properties Trust
University of Hawaii ⁵	- State of Hawaii built the properties for the University
UC Irvine ⁶	-Nonprofit, free standing entity -They claim most accessible housing plan -Independent financing -They are a fully contained small city
Rutgers University 7	-Johnson Apartments Built by the University -The Vue is a privately constructed building in which the university owns several condos -Highland Montgomery is a private apartment complex in which the university owns and rents two units
University of Toronto ⁸	-Formerly and originally private homes, which the University gradually purchased over time -Homes were purchased by the University after they were built, so private party construction and university purchase after the fact -Project financed by University
University of Washington ⁹	-UW and Spectrum Development -Overall project costs was \$50,686,696

	Sustainability - Table 5
UC Davis 1	-Planned as Zero Energy, not yet achieved -Geothermal heating and cooling -Solar panels, recycled materials, drought resistant plants -Sustainably harvested wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council
Stanford ²	-Solar-ready for easy installation -Tankless hot water heaters -Electric car charging stations can be installed in garage -Smart thermostats -Energy Star kitchen appliances, LED lighting
UC San Diego ³	-No specifications or sustainability goals
University of British Columbia ⁴	-The structures adhere to the UBC Residential Environmental Assessment Program -All buildings within walking or biking distance from the main academic campus, parks, schools, community centre and daycares
University of Hawaii 5	- Very old buildings, sustainability was not a priority during construction -Adding LED and low flow faucets to all buildings
UC Irvine ⁶	-Leed silver certified (insulation, lighting, heating, reflective roof) -240 solar panels installed in last 4 years -Build it green requirement acceded by 45%
Rutgers University 7	-There are no sustainability aspects to note in any of these complexes
University of Toronto ⁸	-Updated windows and roofing, better appliances, furnaces
University of Washington ⁹	-LEED Gold through Certification -Monitor of energy usage w/energy dashboard kiosk in main lobby -Low energy heat recovery system -High efficiency condensing boilers for hot water -Variant refrigerant flow heating, venting, and air conditioning for lower floors -Thermostats in rooms to allow resident to control heat, but sets the temp lower when the space is unoccupied -Lighting and appliances that meet EnergStar Standards.

	Type of Housing/Program/Size - Table 6
UC Davis ¹	-single family homes
Stanford ²	-68 single family homes (58 detached & 10 attached) -112 condominiums in two 4-story buildings -180 total -Community center, pool and gym
UC San Diego ³	-Rental apartments and homes -18 2 bedroom 2.5 bathroom condos -"Limited number" of 3 bedroom single family homes -Home buying assistance for a 50 mile radius of campus
University of British Columbia ⁴	-1 to 4 bedroom Townhomes and Apartments -12 buildings 700 units available - Goal to have 2000 units by 2040
University of Hawaii 5	-237 units -Apartment complex & townhomes
UC Irvine ⁶	-Homes and apartment buildings -1 to 4 bedrooms -1,482 households -360 rentals the rest for-sale homes -14 parks -Over 300 acres -Community Center -Within walking distance of shopping, restaurants and entertainment, as well as campus academic and athletic activities
Rutgers University 7	-Highland Montgomery: has a Studio, 1 and 2 Bedroom -Johnson Apts has 2 Bedroom apartments -The Vue has a 1 and 2 Bedroom.
University of Toronto ⁸	-Former single family and rooming houses, most of which have been divided into multi unit buildings (2 and 3 apartments per building) -Apartment and single family houses -As of 2019 U of T have 74 NFH units.
University of Washington	-Student Apartment Housing/195,118 Square Feet

	Affordability/Eligibility - Table 7
UC Davis ¹	-Graduate students, faculty and staff -Targeted at junior faculty but available for anyone -80% of average Davis, CA home -No pets -"The project is designed to help recruit and retain employees faced with the high cost of housing in the Davis area while meeting ambitious energy saving and sustainability goals" -Chancellor Ralph J. Hexter
Stanford ²	-Faculty who are first time home buyers and have not owned a detached single-family home within the area in the three years prior to written offer of employment Five Types of Programs -Housing Allowance Program -Mortgage Assistance Program -Deferred Interest Program -Reduced Interest Program -Zero Interest Program
UC San Diego ³	-RENTALS: 24 month lease commitment, extensions not guaranteed because of the demand for new incoming faculty -BUYING: Faculty Home Buying Assistance Program started in 2011 primary objective "to support the recruitment and retention of faculty by providing assistance with entrance into the San Diego homeowner's market" -house within 50 mile radius -forgivable down payment loans and first mortgage subsidies
University of British Columbia ⁴	-UBC owns a lot of land. The university leases the land to subcontractors. These subcontractors bring in profit from their renters. The rent from these facilities helps to ensure a 25% discount rate for the staff and faculty housing
University of Hawaii ⁵	- Buildings are paid off and don't have current plans to expand so maintaining low rent costs is easy -They are a self supported program through the university and don't aim to make large profit
UC Irvine ⁶	-Mortgage origination plan offered to all 10 UC campuses -Nervous about new solar requirements and the effect on cost

Rutgers University ⁷	-Johnson Apartments, Piscataway: \$1,950 -Highland Montgomery, Highland Park: \$1,600 - \$2,125 -The Vue, New Brunswick: \$2,530 - \$3,260 -TV, Wifi, Utilities included in rent.
University of Toronto ⁸	-Unit housing charges are set to be slightly below local market rate -Utilities are also included, as is use of faculty laundry rooms -Housing not advertised outside of university channels -Must be a newly appointed faculty with a full time tenure stream appointment at the University of Toronto -OR newly appointed faculty with a full time continuing status stream appointment in the teaching stream at the University of Toronto
University of Washington 9	-Must be a UW student to live in these apartments

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⁵ University Housing, n.d; Herndan, 2019

⁶ Irvine Campus Housing Authority, n.d.; Lachman, 2019

⁷ Institutional Planning and Operations 1-5, n.d.; Kratovil, 2012

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