



Illinois Wesleyan University

Theme Housing Process

The Office of Residential Life at Illinois Wesleyan University is proud to continue a 32-year tradition of themed residential living areas on the IWU campus. To foster the broadest range of successful living options possible, and in order to assure that residential groups contribute significantly to students' individual development and the Illinois Wesleyan University community, the Office of Residential Life provides the following guidelines for reference as interested groups of students complete the application process. We appreciate your interest in making our campus community richer and more diverse in options and experiences.

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Theme Living Mission

By offering themed residential living options, Illinois Wesleyan University continues to offer students opportunities to learn together outside the classroom. The opportunity is made available to groups of students who share a vision, a commonality or interest. By living together in campus housing, theme groups have an opportunity to learn and grow together, while accepting the privileges and responsibilities that come with occupying block housing settings. Interested groups of students are eligible for theme living if they meet the identified criteria, including having a mission, a predetermined roster of students committed to living within the theme community, and a community proposal for the goals and intentions of their group during their year-long occupancy in the small hall.

Theme living is designed to increase the range of housing options available to all students. It allows students to experience the benefits and rewards of living in a smaller community, while ensuring equitable access to residential resources. Theme living is an option for interested groups whose mission is consistent with the goals and purposes of Illinois Wesleyan University and whose ability to enhance that mission will be increased by the opportunity to live together. 1

Theme living is potentially made available in three of Illinois Wesleyan University's small halls, by floor, or by building. Groups interested in bidding for theme housing should contact Carolyn Becker via email at cbecker@iwu.edu.

Theme Area Selection Process

Illinois Wesleyan University has supported theme living since 1990 with the designation of Kemp Hall as International House. In recent years, areas dedicated to art, wellness, spirituality, and language interests have also been provided. Each year, before the campus wide housing lottery assignment occurs, students are given an opportunity to commit to living within a theme community through an application process. Interested groups of students can propose their themed housing primarily for the Small Halls with limited consideration for other specific spaces on campus. New charter proposals for the upcoming academic year will be presented the week of January 31, 2011. Representatives from each interested group must schedule an informational session with the Small Halls Residence Director before the January 14, 2011 to answer any questions and provide guidance with the application process.

Once submitted, applications will be reviewed by the Theme Review Advisory Committee (TRAC). In addition to the application, representatives are asked to give a 15 minute presentation on their proposal. Theme Charters will be granted on the quality of the proposals

1 Recognition is due to Lawrence University and Oberlin College for providing some language, themes and ideas captured in this document. We celebrate the excellent examples provided by our Student Affairs colleagues at these institutions.

submitted, and assigned to living units. Announcements will be made on Friday, February 11, 2011. Students selected to live in theme areas will be exempt from participating in the housing lottery process as they will be pre-assigned housing within a particular themed community.

Eligibility

In order to be individually considered for allocation of a theme living area, the members of the proposed group must be comprised of individuals who have lived on campus for two semesters and are eligible for the housing lottery as indicated by University housing policies. In addition, the proposed theme group must meet and agree to the following criteria:

- 1) The proposing group of students must be able to provide a roster of interested housing applicants. The number of housing applicants should reflect the occupancy of the desired housing unit. Proposing groups should also provide a number of alternative students (5% - 10% recommended) to fill the roster in case accepted community members are unable to ultimately live in the community.
- 2) The proposed group must demonstrate a commitment to the Illinois Wesleyan University community through proposed outreach/service activities, such as volunteering for local service organizations, raising money for worthy causes, or sponsoring speakers and programs on topics of interest to the IWU community intrinsic to the respective theme community.
- 3) Theme communities whose occupancy falls below a 90 percent threshold level at any point in time will be subject to removal from the facility and its members to re-assignment so that another interested group of students may be placed in the facility.

Questions to answer in the proposal

- 1) What is the mission of this theme community and How does the mission focus the activities of the theme community?
- 2) How does the mission support or enhance the academic environment of a liberal-arts institution?
- 3) What programs will be planned? How do these programs relate to the proposed mission of the theme community?
- 4) How will this community garner support from faculty or staff? Have faculty/staff members who may have a vested interest in the proposed theme community been identified and contacted? If so, to what extent will these individuals be involved in the community?
- 5) How will the diversity of the proposed theme community group members contribute to building a learning environment?

- 6) How will this community facilitate inclusiveness both in application for housing and in programming throughout the year?
- 7) What will your community do for fun?
- 8) What makes this idea stand out above others?
- 9) How will the proposed theme community maintain enthusiasm and commitment throughout the academic year?

Enhancement of the Campus Co-Curricular Experience

It is expected that members of theme communities fulfill certain programming and involvement requirements that support the theme community's mission while enhancing the mission of the Office of Residential Life.

Programming

Programming efforts should be facilitated by the theme community, and is **not** the responsibility of the Resident Assistant or other ORL staff members. Programming should be ongoing, including both active and passive elements. It is the responsibility of the community to keep accurate records of the programming and submit it to TRAC. A programming guide is available on the Theme Housing website.

Additionally, groups living within theme housing must make a commitment to welcome other members of the Illinois Wesleyan University community into their common area spaces. This should be done at least once a semester in a manner intended to benefit the campus community. This could occur as a meal or potluck, a speaker, study break, or social or educational gathering. This requirement is intended to help foster a greater sense of campus community, to provide students interested in theme communities an opportunity to observe them in action, and to make campus members feel welcome. In addition, once a year, the Office of Residential Life will sponsor an open house in each of the small halls for housing selection purposes.

Funding

Each hall has a programming budget that is based on the number of residence living within the hall. Theme communities will be supplied with a projected budget for the academic year. The hall/floor will have access to programming funds, however, hall/floor spending must be approved by the greater community as a whole (via Hall Governance meetings). Residence Directors are ultimately in charge of allocating funds, so communication is essential.

Hall Governance and Representation

It is required of each theme community to have representation in both Student Senate and the Residence Hall Association (RHA), as well as the Theme Review Advisory Committee (TRAC).

- Student Senate meets every other Sunday at 7pm in Senate Chambers (Hansen)
- RHA meets Mondays at 9pm in the Davidson Room (Memorial Center)
- TRAC meets Tuesday at 9am in the Office of Residential Life Conference Room

It is required that theme communities establish a hall government with regular meeting times to discuss programming, RHA/Senate reports, and other pertinent community issues. Coordinators of the Hall Government should be elected/named as soon as possible. These individuals will be in charge of facilitating meetings, communicating with the greater IWU community, and submitting programming to TRAC.

Probation

If theme communities fail to meet expectations, they are subject to a probationary period. The Theme Review Advisory Committee will determine the length and conditions of this probation. If a community is unable to restore their status, they are in jeopardy of losing their theme charter and ability to renew their theme for the following academic year.

Assessment and Renewal

For the Assessment of a Theme Community:

It is necessary for theme communities to live-up to their proposals and mission which granted them this unique housing opportunity. Thus, it is essential for theme communities to provide documentation which will display their commitment to their original proposal. This documentation will also be necessary if a theme community decides to go through the renewal process, continuing their charter into the following academic year.

During the fall semester, the theme community will compile a report (either written or in presentation format that may be up to 30 minutes) that will cover activities that have already occurred as well as planned activities for the rest of the academic year. These activities should demonstrate a commitment to the Illinois Wesleyan University community in accordance to their theme.

The topics considered for theme assessment will include but are not limited to:

- 1) How has the themed community lived up to their proposed mission?
- 2) What programming has been put on by the community up until the point of the report/presentation?
- 3) How has the community enhanced the intellectual life of Illinois Wesleyan University's campus and beyond?
- 4) How has community been built within the hall?

- 5) What are the future plans of the community for the rest of the semester and throughout the next year (see page 3-4, "Questions to answer in the proposal")

All assessment presentations may be given by November 30, 2010. Please contact Carolyn Becker to schedule a presentation: cbecker@iwu.edu.

For the Renewal of a Theme Community:

Communities interested in continuing their theme into the next academic year must go through a renewal process. Communities should review their assessment report/presentation and resubmit documentation that reflects on their assessment as well as responds to the questions on page 3-4, "Questions to answer in the proposal." Renewal presentations will occur on either the week of January 24, 2011/

If the theme community is deemed in good standing, they are granted the opportunity to continue their theme charter through the following academic year. A roster of occupants for the following year will be confirmed after approval of renewal by March 4, 2011.

Residential Life Staff

Resident Assistants in theme communities participate fully as members of the ORL staff; including attendance at training sessions, program planning and policy enforcement, as well as other job responsibilities outlined in the RA position description. RAs in theme communities are paid staff members hired by the Office of Residential Life and supervised by an RD. While interested members of the community and community leaders are encouraged to explore staff positions, the Office of Residential Life will select the RAs who show "best fit" for themed communities from a pool of applicants. Selection for ORL staff positions for the following academic year generally occurs each year in January and February.

Theme Review Advisory Committee (TRAC)

The Theme Review Advisory Committee (TRAC) is comprised of two Residence Directors, the Associate Dean of Students, the president of the Residence Hall Associate, the Assistant Director of Residential Life, and representatives from each theme community. This group is responsible for advising each theme community, reviewing applications and proposals for new and existing themes, and discussing pertinent issues relevant to theme housing.

The Theme Review Advisory Committee offers each theme community the opportunity to have representation. This individual will serve as a liaison between TRAC and their theme community. They will also be responsible for communicating with TRAC, recording programming, and disseminating appropriate related information to their community.