

# A Proposal to the Office of Residential Life

## Residence Hall Accommodations

March 2020



**Luke Morgan**

President Pro-Tempore of the Senate

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To the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Residential Life,

We, the United Student Government at Rose Hill write this proposal in response to Fordham University's communications concerning the closing of residence halls at the Rose Hill campus. At this time, there has been no communication from the Office of Residential Life or the Office of Student Affairs concerning exceptions to the order to vacate or resources for students who are being forced to vacate with very little notice.

**At this time, we propose that the Office of Residential Life make the following clarifications and accommodations**

- I. We ask that the Office of Residential Life make clarifications on the move-out process for students who will be vacating.
  - A. The current circumstances have been confusing for many residential students. It is important to set a specific date and time, or establish a strict window for students to collect their belongings.
  - B. We recommend that the messaging from Fordham University to its students regarding the collection of their vital belongings be clear and concise.
- II. As students vacate O'Hare Hall, we ask that Campus Operations disinfect and turnover empty rooms for placement of international and domestic students who are unable to return home due to extenuating circumstances.
  - A. We ask that these be single placements into double rooms (i.e. each student would be assigned their own room for their own well-being as well as others.)
- III. We ask that the Office of Residential Life offer storage options on-campus for students who are vacating campus.
  - A. We recommend that this storage take place in the first floor of O'Hare Hall in vacant residential rooms between 111-127 as well as the accompanying lounge.
  - B. This on-campus storage must allow students to store up to 7 large boxes.
    1. Box dimension max: 24X24X36

The United Student Government recognizes the importance of a cohesive message from the administration to the students of Fordham University. One immediate action that can be taken to ease student concerns is to clarify existing discrepancies regarding the status of housing on campus. In an email sent out on March 13th (A1), the Office of Residential Life stated that they will make arrangements for belonging collection "between Monday, March 30, and Sunday, May 17." This directly contradicts the FAQ page regarding COVID-19, which instead lists Friday, April 3 as the pickup date (see appendix attached). In a time of legitimate crisis, these miscommunications further confuse and alienate the student body. The collection of belongings needs to be swift and strictly managed to ensure the smooth transition to online instruction.

Recognizing the severity of COVID-19, we applaud all proactive efforts of the University to combat the spread of this virus in our community. Included in these efforts, we feel that adequate accommodations should be made for international students whose countries are classified as level three or four and/or have closed their borders. Displacing these students at such a turbulent time would be an inconsiderate and irresponsible action on behalf of a University committed to "provid[ing] sufficient financial assistance to ensure that [diverse populations] can attend and thrive at Fordham" ([Strategic Plan](#)).

While it is notable that Fordham University has pledged itself to "creat[ing] a more diverse and inclusive community" through its integration of a geographically diverse student body ([Strategic Plan](#)), it is all the

more necessary that Fordham be attentive to the extenuating circumstances of our 400 undergraduate international students and take necessary action to protect these members of the Fordham community. Several home countries of international students are under lockdown, preventing inbound flights from all countries affected by COVID-19. As a result, forcing students from these countries to vacate housing on-campus would result in abandoning a population of students who may be ill-equipped to secure viable housing options in a foreign country due to a lack of personal connections or an inability to sign immediate leases due to citizenship status. Furthermore, there has been little to no input from the Office of International Services in regards to assisting international students in the pursuit of accommodations.

In addition, we ask that these exceptions and accommodations be made for students who are facing extreme economic burdens as a result of the current situation. We ask that the University recognize that many students partially or even fully financially support themselves. Through this unexpected displacement, these students are being asked to (1) find and pay for costly last-minute housing accommodations in the surrounding area if they choose to/have the financial means to stay, or (2) be forced to give up their primary/secondary means of income.

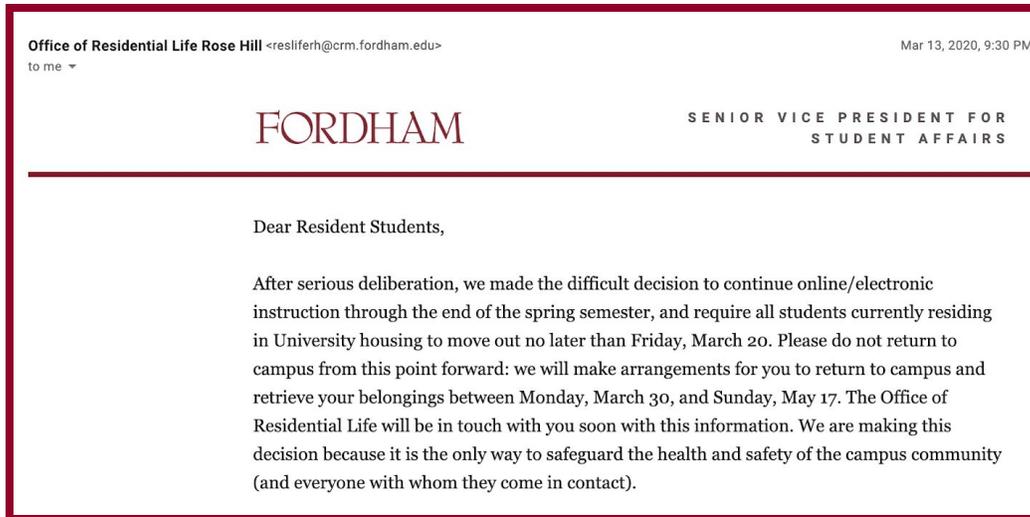
Also, we urge the University to acknowledge that some members of the Fordham community, who call Fordham home, may come from hostile or unwelcoming family environments. In consideration of the fact that residents on Fordham's campus come from all backgrounds, some students find University Housing a safe, reliable space in which they can freely express themselves and feel truly at home. While all decisions made on behalf of the University were chiefly to "safeguard the health and safety of the campus community" ([Coronavirus Updates](#)), as an unforeseen result, they may also force certain residential students back into difficult, unstable home environments solely because of their inability to find or afford alternative last-minute housing accommodations.

We, as the United Student Government, ask for these accommodations on behalf of residential students at the Rose Hill campus. Fordham is our home and through these extremely difficult circumstances, *cura personalis* remains one of the fundamental tenets of our Jesuit University. In describing Fordham University, Fr. McShane has said, "We're a tight community in New York City, and we value and educate the whole person. Much of our Jesuit history and mission comes down to three ideas, which, translated from the Latin, mean roughly this: strive for excellence in everything you do, care for others, fight for justice."

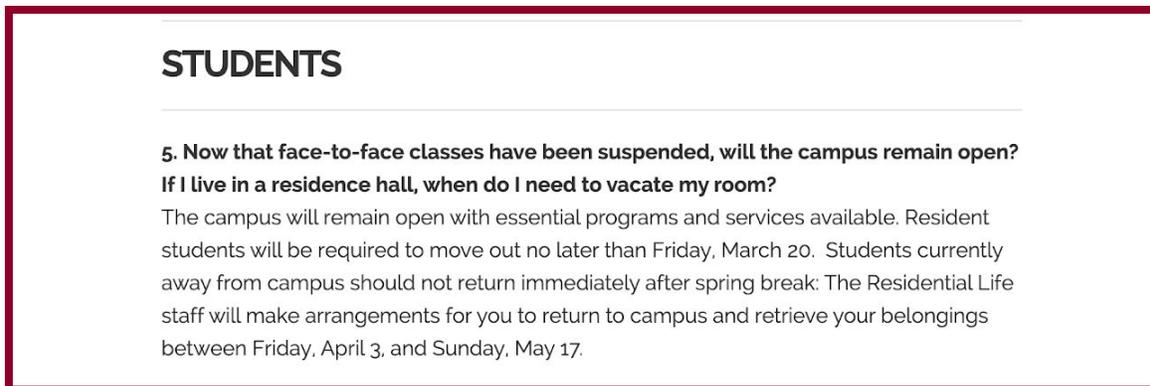
We, as the United Student Government, urge the University to remain committed to their promise of caring for others, promoting justice, and ensuring a tight community by creating accommodations for residential students facing extenuating circumstances at the Rose Hill campus.

The United Student Government at Rose Hill

## Appendix



Source: Email from the Office of Residential Life on March 13



Source: Coronavirus FAQ page on Fordham University website as of 3/16/20 at 9 a.m.