

AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY LIVING

WELCOME!

Welcome to the world of on-campus living at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA). The staff of Residential Life & Housing (RLH) has been eagerly awaiting your arrival and is looking forward to getting to know you better during the coming year.

The character of residential living is often a good indication of the quality of life on campus. For this reason, MCLA and Residence Life & Housing (RLH) strive to make each of its residence areas a place where students can establish lasting friendships, develop positive self-esteem and learn in an atmosphere which fosters academics, creativity and personal growth.

The overall quality of a residence life program is directly linked to the strength of student participation. For that reason, we invite you to become involved in the activities and governance of your residence area. Applying for an RLH leadership position will enable you to enhance your leadership skills and contribute to the overall quality of campus life. The members of the RLH staff are here to assist you in discovering ways to get involved in campus activities and to help ensure that your experience at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts is a positive one. Please do not hesitate to ask for information, help or support when you need it.

LIVING IN A COMMUNITY

MCLA has three on-campus residence areas: Berkshire Towers, Hoosac Hall and the Flagg Townhouse Apartment Complex. While they share some similarities, each of the residence areas forms its own distinct, complex and diverse community. Residence Life & Housing (RLH) highly values the development of community within each of the residence areas and has designed its programs and services in such a manner as to foster community-building.

What exactly is a community? A community is a group of individuals who 1) are engaged in social interaction, 2) possess common interests and goals, 3) show concern for and are sensitive to the needs of other members, and 4) are primarily interested in furthering the group's goals over all others. For students in the three residence areas, a community provides a sense of belonging and a set of shared experiences. Ultimately, a sense of community enables individual students to feel part of a mutually identifiable group, that in many ways, is like a substitute family.

Why is living within a community so important? Residence Life & Housing (RLH) strongly believes that the learning process is not limited to the classroom experience. The majority of a resident's time is spent in the residence areas - getting to know fellow residents, participating in social and educational programs and discovering the balance between individual rights and group

responsibilities. Living within a community enhances the out-of-classroom learning experience by teaching each individual how to develop common goals and values; a greater acceptance of self and others; and deeper, more intimate relationships. Further, living within a community aids in shaping and developing a sense of personal integrity and ethics. It is one of the key ways individuals learn that there are some situations where "the group" is more important than any one individual.

In the residence areas, your Resident Advisor (RA) will meet with you and other members of your floor or section to discuss the importance of community development and solicit your input on how to build a positive community that is sensitive to the needs of your floor/section members. Issues you can expect to discuss include activity planning, recognition events, quiet hours, use of common areas and how to handle any problems or concerns that may arise.

CELEBRATING AND PROTECTING DIVERSITY WITHIN THE RESIDENCE AREA COMMUNITIES

Each residence area at MCLA is a microcosm of the overall College community and society-at-large. Our residents represent all different sizes, shapes, genders, ages, skin colors, physical and mental abilities, sexual and gender identities, religious beliefs & ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Residence Life & Housing (RLH) highly values the diversity that our residents bring to the residence areas and encourages all members of the on-campus communities to join us in learning about and celebrating the richness that is created by our many differences and similarities. Residents are encouraged to help plan programs and activities that explore all areas of diversity. The Resident Advisor (RA) staff has been trained to assist with this process of discovery.

Residence Life & Housing (RLH) firmly believes that we share in the responsibility of ensuring the residence areas provide an environment in which all community members are able to participate and develop intellectually and emotionally, free from fear, violence or harassment. Toward that end, our policies and programs have been designed in accordance with the College's Affirmative Action Plan which was developed in an effort to promote a respect for diversity and ensure the equitable and fair treatment of all campus community members.

Additional information about the College's Affirmative Action Plan can be found in the MCLA Student Handbook which is available in the Student Life section of the MCLA website (www.mcla.edu). Residents who have questions about diversity-related policies and programs should contact their Residence Director.

THE R.P.S. STAFF: A CARING & DEDICATED TEAM

To help you make the most of your on-campus experience, each residence area is staffed by a variety of trained students and professionals. The staff in each area includes the following individuals:

Residence Directors (RDs) are professional staff members with a degree and/or experience in Higher Education. RDs live in the residence area and assume responsibility for the total operation of the facility including advising and counseling individuals and student groups; coordinating activities and programming; and administering residence life policies. The RD staff coordinates the work of all the other staff members to make living in the residence area an enjoyable and worthwhile experience.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, our live-in staff members are:

Berkshire Towers: Adriana Segura,
Residence Director

Townhouses: Dianne Manning,
Director

The **Resident Advisor (RA)** staff is comprised of full-time students who have successfully completed an intensive selection process and rigorous training program. Each floor or section of Townhouses has its own RA. The RA's role is to assist with personal and group problems; coordinate activities and programs; and ensure that the guidelines for community living are upheld. At the start of each semester, RAs are instrumental in helping the residents on their floor/section get to know each other, forming the basis of a community of friends.

Residence Area Security Monitors (RASMs) staff the main desks of Berkshire Towers 24 hours a day. RASMs greet and assist visitors to the residence area, coordinate the services offered at the desk, answer the area desk telephone and provide frontline security by managing building access.

The **Residence Life & Housing (RLH) office** is located in Townhouse #89 (H Block) and is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 am - 4:45 pm. The RLH office coordinates the operation of all three residence areas and assists students with questions and referrals. Administrative Assistant, Terry Burdick and Director, Dianne Manning have their offices in Townhouse #89.

THE 2021-2022 RESIDENT ADVISOR STAFF

Whether you're having a problem with your roommate, need some information or just want to talk to someone, contacting your Resident Advisor is a good place to start....

Berkshire Towers

| | | |
|------|--------------------------|----------------|
| A211 | Cassie Washburn | (A1 & A2) |
| A411 | Kate Tomasetti | (A3 & A4) |
| A611 | Cassie & Kate | (A5, A6 & A72) |
| B211 | Heather Hughes | (B1 & B2) |
| B411 | Alyna Cubilete Carbonell | (B3 & B4) |
| B611 | Haelie Paquette | (B5 & B6) |
| B811 | Pablo Calderon | (B7 & B8) |

Flagg Townhouse Apartment Complex

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| T39 | Kayla Ruff | (Apts. T37-T46) |
| T49 | Payten Pearsall | (Apts. T17-26 & T47-T52) |
| T59 | Lucien Thomas-Vickory | (Apts. T53-T64) |
| T69 | Mike Bankowski | (Apts. T65-T76) |
| T79 | Lauren Henne | (Apts. T77-T88) |

RESIDENCE AREA ADVISORY BOARDS

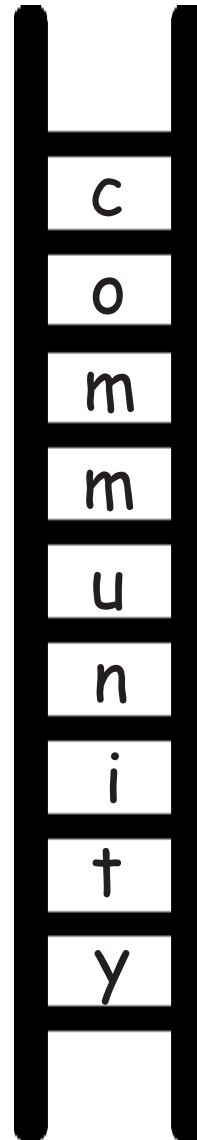
WHAT IS A RESIDENCE AREA ADVISORY BOARD?

Every good community needs some form of governance system to make sure that the community's needs are met. In the MCLA residence areas, this governance system is called the Residence Area Advisory Board.

Each of our three residence areas has its own Advisory Board. The Advisory Board is comprised of the Residence Director, 1 or 2 members of the Resident Advisor staff and student representatives. In Berkshire Towers, each floor selects a student to serve as their representative on the Board. In the Flagg Townhouse Apartment Complex, each section of apartments has the opportunity to select a student to serve as their representative on the Board.

Once the core members of the Board are selected, Board members identify other individuals they would like to invite to serve on the Board. Other members of the Board could include a residence area Maintainer, a Public Safety officer, faculty, administrators or anyone else the Board thinks would complement their work.

All Advisory Board meetings are open to anyone who lives in the residence area. So even if you're not an official member, you can still come and let your voice be heard on issues and activities that are of concern to you and the other members of the community.



HOW DO THEY WORK?

The agenda of each Residence Area Advisory Board is determined by the concerns and interests of the residents in each area. At the beginning of each semester, the Residence Director helps the Board to identify the issues and activities they would like to explore.

Most often, the Advisory Boards focus their attention on "quality of life" issues that affect the residents they represent. These could include identifying improvements that should be made to the residence areas, discussing community expectations or helping to address problem behaviors within the residence area. Advisory Boards also help to plan activities aimed at bringing the community closer together.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET INVOLVED?

If you are interested in helping to form a vital, responsive community within your residence area, talk to your Resident Advisor or your Residence Director about becoming a representative on the Advisory Board. Board member selection is usually held at the beginning of each semester. Get involved.....and make a difference at MCLA! Your involvement could lead to bigger and better things, like a nomination to the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH). NRHH honors the top one percent of resident students across the country for their contributions to the quality of on-campus life at their institutions.

CARE & FEEDING OF A ROOMMATE

To those of you who are new, we congratulate you on your admission to MCLA. To those of you who are returning, welcome back. In either case, now that you've arrived and moved into your residence area and your new home for the next nine months, you're probably starting to wonder about what the year will be like. "What about my roommate?" "Will we get along?" "What will it be like to live with someone else?" Then your confidence builds, "Of course we'll get along. I'm an easy person to get along with and besides, my roommate is a college student just like me."

If it were only that easy! For many college students, sharing a bedroom, especially when it is also your living room, is a new experience. Your new roommate may be an old high school friend, distant cousin, friend of a friend of somebody's sister or a total stranger. Regardless of how well you think you may know your roommate, Residential Programs & Services (RPS) has some suggestions to help make your relationship with your roommate more enjoyable.

The following is a list of topics you and your roommate should discuss during the first week and some helpful hints about living with a roommate. Please read this section carefully and take the time to go through it with your roommate. If problems arise and you and your roommate feel the need to talk with someone who can help you sort things out, please seek out your Resident Advisor. Each RA is trained to assist with roommate issues.

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

A good place to start is to compare notes on your different backgrounds and your thoughts about being at MCLA.

- What is your hometown like? Your neighborhood?
- How would you describe your family?
- What do you think you'll miss most about your home?
- Why did you decide to go to college? How did you pick MCLA?
- What most excites you about being here?
- What is there about being here that scares you a little bit?
- What do you expect from a roommate?

EXPLORING EACH OTHER'S LIFESTYLE

Taking the time to share information about each other's habits, likes, dislikes, preferences and need for personal space is essential to building a strong and responsive relationship with your roommate. Some of the many topics to discuss include:

- How will we set up the room? What about food in the room? Do we share?
- How neat and clean do you want the room? How do we decide what to clean and when?
- Which of your possessions may be borrowed? Which are off limits?
- What temperature do you like the room?
- What kind of music do you like? How loud? Can you use headphones?
- How much do you study? When do you study? Where do you like to study? How quiet does the room have to be for you to be able to study?

- What time do you go to sleep? What time do you get up? Are you a light or heavy sleeper? Do you snore?
- What about visitors dropping by? How often? How late? What about overnight guests on the weekend?
- How do you deal with anger? Stress?
- If you or your roommate are of legal age in an area where alcohol consumption is permitted, will alcohol be allowed in the room?

ROOMMATE SURVIVAL TIPS

- Never assume your roommate is just like you - you are each individuals.
- Always ask permission. Don't just automatically use your roommate's iron or eat their cookies, even if you think it might be OK.
- Express your feelings to your roommate. Share what's on your mind. Holding things that are bothering you inside is a sure way to destroy a relationship.
- Listen to your roommate and make sure you understand how your roommate feels.
- Discuss the items in the "Getting To Know Each Other" and "Exploring Each Other's Lifestyle" sections as soon as possible.
- Take good messages.
- Appreciate your roommate. Praise, concern and common courtesy can help strengthen any relationship. Never take your roommate for granted.
- Ask your Resident Advisor or Residence Director for help if you and your roommate have a conflict that you can't seem to resolve. They are both trained to help mediate conflicts.
- While a good roommate relationship is an essential part of adjusting to college, it is important to remember that your roommate doesn't have to be your best friend. Roommate relationships run the gamut from acquaintanceship to close, personal friendship. Try to remember that it's how well you communicate, not how much you socialize, that really matters in the end.
- Most importantly, don't expect too much too fast. It takes time to get to know each other. Enjoy the journey!