Dear Housing Services staff, residential students and esteemed colleagues:

For the past three years, the Department of Housing Services has been focused on our strategic plan, which launched in January 2013. When initiated, this plan was widely shared within our department, with our student constituents and among our various campus partners. It was our intent to broadcast our strategic plan goals and to obtain assistance from fellow staff and students in accomplishing these goals.

The plan itself focused on four major areas: services, assessment, planning and outreach. Each of these categories had a significant goal and multiple objectives meant to support each main initiative. In total, there were nearly 50 objectives, which we felt assisted in making our overall strategic plan as comprehensive as possible.

In an effort to ensure that each goal and all objectives were being effectively addressed, a strategic planning task force was created. This task force, chaired by the director of Housing Services, was charged with overseeing the plan, forming liaison relationships with others in the department not on the task force, providing progress updates and completing an overall summary. Over the course of the past three years, this task force met monthly, at a minimum, to ensure the plan stayed on track. With the exception of a few staffing changes, this task force remained intact and committed.

It is our pleasure to announce that the work associated with accomplishing the goals of this strategic plan was concluded on schedule. The plan was always meant to be a three-year endeavor. As a result, in January 2016, the task force came together and determined that we had accomplished almost everything we set out to do in the plan, or at least had made great strides in a positive direction. No strategic plan is ever 100% complete, but the work we have done has set the stage for many new initiatives, incredible accomplishments and an understanding of what still needs to be worked on moving forward.

It is now our pleasure to share the fruits of our labor within our own department, with our students and with our campus partners. We hope you can see all of the great work that has gone into accomplishing the goals we created well over three years ago. This was our department’s first ever strategic plan, and there is a lot of pride in how this was created—and, more importantly, how it was executed. This summary document will be available in a limited number of hard copy booklets as well as on the Housing Services website. We certainly encourage comments, questions and suggestions; please contact Rick Moreci directly at rmoreci@depaul.edu.

Many thanks for the support and very positive relationships that we have cultivated with all receiving this summary. Housing Services continues to strengthen as a department, and this growth would not be possible without all of you. Please enjoy this summary and know that you were a part of it.

Sincerely,
The Strategic Planning Task Force
Housing Services
DePaul University
Goal 1

Better serve students, employees and guests by reviewing and improving Housing Services’ resources.

- **Benchmarking:** Established a comparator group of schools and maintained relationships through conference attendance to regularly benchmark best practices with regard to key processes, including cancellations and appeals, room and board rates, amenities, service animals, minors on campus and safety and security in the residence halls.

- **Damage Billing:** Updated the training rubric for community inspections and end-of-year damage billing along with adding clarifications to the departmental website and Guide to Student Housing in order to create a more transparent process, which has resulted in fewer facility inspection violations.

- **Emergency Procedures:** The emergency planning task force reviewed all Housing Services emergency procedures to determine if any were missing and updated those currently in place. In addition to a thorough review, this task force also created new checklists to accompany critical procedures.

- **Facility Inspections:** The Housing Facilities team, utilizing benchmarking data from other institutions, made several improvements to the facility inspections process that have significantly cut down on the amount of violations discovered during inspections. New initiatives include working with Facility Operations to add more electrical outlets in student rooms, implementing plug locks to disable larger prohibited appliances and creating a more streamlined process for tracking, storing and returning confiscated items.

- **Front Desks:** The Housing Facilities graduate supervisor position was created to further strengthen supervision of front desk operations. New technology was implemented using form creation software to collect end-of-shift reports and incident report information. The front desk management software was augmented to include a way to track minors entering the residence halls. With this new feature in place, front desk operations can track all minors visiting our residence halls at any given time. Front desk operations also created forms that allow residents to register extended-stay guests, minor guests and extra guests in advance of these visits. These forms also allow the resident hosts to save time upon checking their guests in.

- **Marketing:** Streamlined the Admissions tour process by establishing a standard, permanent tour room and by advertising 360-degree virtual room tours of most residence hall room types. Increased outreach to University Center residents via new brochures, a heightened online presence, spotlight videos and a student newsletter.

- **Move-in:** Greatly increased the resources available to residents moving in both at the beginning of the year and at other times throughout the year. Implemented new marketing resources for students and parents, created new videos, enhanced the move-in section of our website and used ticket and guest wristband systems for ease of checking in, guest tracking and parking.

- **Security:** Enhancements and upgrades were implemented across campus, including new placement of security monitors for greater visibility, relocation of access card readers, addition of PIN-secured key boxes throughout the halls for the safe storage and management of master keys, enhanced camera views and access to camera footage for Facilities Area Coordinators so that they can follow up on security-related issues.
Goal 1

- **StarRez**: Improved student and staff experience through implementation of the StarRez housing software system, which included streamlining multiple processes (assignments, student billing, check-ins, roommate matching, student portal) and programs onto one platform, creating greater user autonomy and information security.

- **Student Housing Collaboration Committee (SHCC)**: When this strategic plan began, Housing Services operated a task force that was specifically geared toward improving our student move-in process. This task force loosely collaborated with our peers in Residential Education since the move-in process was a shared one. It was decided while working on this goal in the strategic plan that the collaborative relationship between Housing Services and Residential Education should be more established and should include additional shared processes other than just move-in, thus the SHCC was born.

- **Surplus With A Purpose (SWAP)**: Documented the SWAP planning and execution processes and realized additional improvements, resulting in a better and more efficient program. In 2015, contributed the largest SWAP donation to date to the Vincentian Assistance Fund and achieved a greater reduction in waste by donating all remaining items to the St. Vincent de Paul Foundation.

- **Technology**: Provided additional amenities for residents to improve the on-campus living experience, including HBO Go, online laundry tracking, residence hall technology lounges and the installation of large monitors in each hall to provide emergency and marketing-related information to students.

- **Technology for Staff**: Implemented the use of iPads for check-ins and as additional support for asset tracking, and established the lead desk receptionist iPad for in-person training. Also created additional student staff positions in the technology area to assist with troubleshooting technology-related issues.

- **Housing Rate Restructure**: Reviewed all residence hall rates for Lincoln Park and streamlined rate types and the number of rates. Rates are now based on established criteria that make them more transparent and easier to understand and explain.

- **Social Media**: Emphasized the importance of managing departmental social media channels—Facebook, Twitter and Instagram—to increase the department’s presence and exposure. In late 2015, Marketing updated a strategy as part of a department-wide goal. Efforts have seen a growth in followers across all channels.

- **Student Employees**: Created opportunities for first-year students in the EDGE program through the Green Team and the Tech and Media Team. Both teams have been very successful and have provided many additional resources to our department.

- **Room Selection**: Beginning with room selection for the 2015 to 2016 academic year, we piloted a process of assigning bedrooms within the Sanctuary Townhomes. This process proved to enhance students’ experiences by making them aware of who they would share a bedroom with within the townhome. This practice appears to have relieved some of the stress of moving in and making roommate decisions in September. The assigning of bedrooms also helps serve the Residential Education and Housing Services staff when dealing with resident conduct and health and safety inspections.
Goal 2

Determine and execute assessment strategy through the lens of our strategic plan and our mission, vision and values.

- **Annual Report**: Created a departmental Annual Report, pulling data from all functional areas to provide information related to occupancy, security, facilities and departmental development.
- **Assessment**: Throughout the last three years, Housing Services has highlighted areas of improvement through focused assessment that has led to a direct impact on specific areas within our department, including our website, admission tours and move-in/out processes. Assessment was performed with surveys and focus groups. Just as this plan was concluding, we made the decision to create an assessment committee within our department that will begin in the fall of 2016.
- **Capital Improvements**: Developed capital improvement strategies, including updated laundry facilities, technology amenities and furniture replacement, in an effort to provide an excellent student experience and remain competitive in the housing market.
- **Pop-up Surveys**: Conducted mini-surveys of students and parents after many of our major processes throughout the year to gain feedback. Examples of such processes include move-in, Room Selection and housing tours.
- **Professional Development**: The Professional Development Committee and Student Training and Development Committee seek feedback from staff regarding training opportunities, guest speakers and topics to be covered throughout the year. The Professional Development Committee also organizes one to two department retreats each year to assist with additional training topics and goal setting. Additionally, all staff who attend a professional development opportunity outside of DePaul are required to complete an assessment of their experience at the conclusion of the event. This feedback helps other members of the Housing Services team learn the best practices and new concepts garnered through the conference attendees’ experience.
- **Goals**: The strategic plan has, over the past three years, also helped the formation of new, annual department SMART goals, which have been successfully completed each year per divisional expectations.
- **Student Compensation**: Through intentional studies and benchmarking, the department has revised the student compensation schedule to include tiers for determining raises, rewarding student staff who remain employed with Housing Services during their time at DePaul.
- **Student Employees**: Created assessment tools and focus groups for various student employees in Housing Services to gain a feel for their experience and the areas in which Housing Services can improve as an employer. The department also created an online opportunity for students and supervisors to acknowledge the good work of student employees through our “shout-out program.” Supervisors and student peers can give employees “shout outs,” and these are tracked and shared with the individuals throughout the year to keep morale a high priority.
Goal 3

Ensure effectiveness and success of Housing Services by optimizing internal communication and utilizing feedback.

- **Social Media:** Housing Facilities created a Facebook group as a way to better communicate with student workers such as desk receptionists. Marketing began using student workers to help monitor and brainstorm content. Marketing also posted its social media strategy and content creation procedures to the wiki and began sharing follower statistics quarterly with staff.

- **Emergency Planning:** Housing Services worked with the departmental emergency planning task force on preparing emergency kits, reviewing and revising current emergency processes, executing fire and lockdown drills with university partners and providing solutions to strengthen the department’s overall emergency strategies.

- **Employee Communications:** Throughout the time of this strategic plan, our department has worked to overhaul and refine full-time employee on-boarding and off-boarding. As a result of this work, there are now internal checklists and access request and removal forms in place to ensure no steps are missed and that employees are getting the best experience. This process is now used with student employees as well. These enhancements have assisted in auditing user access in the various systems used by Housing Services.

- **Facilities:** As a department, we have worked to enhance our communication to residents regarding any facilities work, emergency and nonemergency, that needed to be conducted in student units. A new procedure for providing notices was created as a result.

- **Front Desks:** The front desks at Clifton-Fullerton and McCabe halls were renovated to enhance resident and staff experience. New guest policy signage was added to each desk. A front desk news page was created on the wiki and a front desk employee Facebook page was created to maximize affinity between a large number of student employees.

- **Moves:** Housing Facilities, Assignments, Facility Projects and Marketing held several pre-move meetings to plan for logistics of move-outs and transitions. The groups identified student needs and augmented programs and services to fit those times (move-out cart availability, elevator/gate staffing, transition moves, etc.). Each work group held meetings after move-in, and managers then met in September to combine all feedback. The department also identified that residents moving in mid-year have special needs, and Marketing created a mid-year move-in guide for them. Marketing also created a move-in guide specific to residents of University Center.

- **Procedures:** All procedures were moved to the departmental wiki and were labeled, tagged and organized for better and more dynamic search ability. All staff are now able to update procedures throughout the year, as needed. As a result of utilizing the wiki for this purpose, procedures are now easier to access, better organized and more up-to-date.

- **Rick Feed:** The director’s area established a monthly “Rick Feed” post, which acts as a fun, bullet point-style catchall of projects and accomplishments that have taken place within Housing Services in any given month. This info is shared with all full-time, part-time and student staff on the wiki.

- **Student Employees:** Utilized multiple types of training and communication with our
student staff in an effort to maximize use of their time. This included the use of Strengths Quest training, on-site training and involvement in the Student Training and Development Committee. The Employee Engagement and Recognition Committee has worked hard to enhance the end-of-year student employee appreciation event for all Housing Services student employees.

- **Student Newsletter:** For some time, Housing Services has mailed a printed newsletter, called “Under Our Roof,” to parents and guardians to communicate important information and happenings. During the course of this strategic plan, we began an emailed newsletter for students, called “The Blue Beat,” to similarly communicate with all of our residents.

- **University Center:** During the course of completing this strategic plan, it became increasingly apparent to us that we needed to do a better job of communicating information about University Center to potential and current residents. We streamlined many processes and marketing and communication materials related to University Center, including combining the Lincoln Park and University Center housing agreements into one document. Occupancy at University Center has been steadily rising over the past three years and continues to increase.

- **Website:** The Housing Services website has undergone many changes during the time of this strategic plan, including a complete overhaul when it moved to SharePoint. Housing Services also now uses Google Analytics to access a wealth of statistical data, including which pages are being viewed the most.

- **Wiki:** Housing Services started using DePaul's internal wiki and in a short time came to rely heavily on this platform as one of our largest methods for communication, information storage and information sharing, as well as a key resource for all full-time and professional staff. Examples of items stored on the wiki include meeting agendas and minutes, housing procedures, checklists, phone lists and planning documents. Housing Services also shares a space on the wiki with colleagues in Residential Education, where information impacting each group is stored for reference.

- **StarRez Internal Manual:** The Assignments team created an internal manual to show all steps and information needed to utilize the system to the best of our abilities.
• **Collaboration:** Increasing our department’s collaborative efforts with other areas has been one of the most significant outcomes of this strategic plan. Below is a nonexhaustive list of examples of this increased collaboration:

  - The Housing Services director sits on the operating committees of 1237 West and the University Center.
  - Marketing works with Admissions on the campus tour room and the weekly tours that are conducted.
  - Housing Services partners with Residence Hall Council on loft and fridge delivery as well as on several joint programming efforts and capital project planning.
  - Assignments has strengthened relationships with Athletics, Enrollment Management and the Center for Students with Disabilities, as well as several other departments.
  - Our housing facilities areas continue to communicate and work with Facility Operations on a regular and intentional basis.
  - Our department also has strong ties with Student Affairs, Residential Education, New Student and Family Engagement, Dean of Students, Student Centers, Public Safety, etc.

All of these relationships are critical to the success of Housing Services. Some of the most notable examples of the work accomplished throughout the term of this strategic plan are noted below:

  - **Student Government Association (SGA):** Housing Services worked with SGA to provide tours of Lincoln Park and University Center residence halls and also engaged in joint programming efforts such as Blue Demon Week, Thursdays We Wear Blue and other events.
  - **Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD):** Housing Services has worked with this department to continue to meet the housing needs of our students, including working with General Counsel on a university procedure for service/companion animals. In addition, a more streamlined process for students to self-identify any needs they may have when evacuating a building due to an emergency situation was developed in conjunction with Housing Services, Public Safety and the Center for Students with Disabilities.
  - **Residential Education:** This strategic plan has helped Housing Services strengthen its relationship and collaboration with Residential Education. As the department with which Housing Services works most closely, several examples have been presented throughout this document about this relationship.
  - **Student Centers:** Housing Services and Student Centers have worked closely together for the last several years in an effort to transition the management of student residential meal plans from Student Centers to Housing Services so that students could have a one-stop shop for all of their room and board needs. Additionally, Housing Services and Student Centers continue to work very closely together and make enhancements associated with the summer conference program.
  - **Public Safety:** The directors of Public Safety and Housing Services instituted an annual
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safety and security walk-through of all residence hall front desks, lobby areas and building exteriors. On these walks, several concerns have been identified and quickly rectified to increase security for residential students. In 2015, the director of Residential Education began joining these tours.

- **Student Affairs:** Housing Services has been working with Student Affairs to assist in providing options for students looking for off-campus housing. This was particularly evident in the past year when Student Affairs was bringing on a new vendor to market off-campus housing options.

- **Residence Hall Council (RHC):** There have been many ties to this student organization over the years (some discussed at other points in this document), from programming to capital planning to student satisfaction. Much of this sharing of information happens via monthly meetings with the directors of Housing Services and Residential Education and the president of RHC.

- **Professional Development Committee:** Through in-house meetings, the committee established better relationships with Title IX Coordinators, Mission and Values, New Student and Family Engagement, International Programs, Office of Multicultural Student Success, University Ministries, Enrollment Management, and the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness. Each group has presented to Housing Services so that the departments better understand each other and how they can work together to offer their services to on-campus residents.

- **University Center:** Marketing worked with Enrollment Management & Marketing and the University Center to install a mural and other DePaul University–spirited wall art on a DePaul floor in the building. In addition, Assignments has continued to work with International Programs to establish housing spaces for students in various international programs. Assignments has also continued to work with graduate and law programs for their housing needs at University Center.

- **1237 West:** There has been a significant increase in DePaul’s collaboration with 1237 West in terms of assisting them with marketing to our students to showcase 1237 West as a great option for housing for DePaul students. Additionally, our offices have worked together to create a new shared cancellation policy that allows students to more easily switch from campus housing to 1237 West, or vice versa, at certain points of the year with a reduced cancellation fee.

- **Memos of Understanding (MOUs):** Over the last three years, Housing Services staff has helped author several MOUs with various campus partners in an effort to document shared processes, confirm deadlines and reach an agreement about our shared work together. While Housing Services has written several, there are more to write and a list of pending MOUs has been established.

- **Vendor Relationships:** Housing Services has multiple vendor relationships for laundry, furniture, technology, flooring, printing, etc. All of these external relationships have only gotten stronger in the past three years.