The College Houses: Two Reports

John Gee
My Research

• CHAS College Houses Research Internship
  – Archives and *Almanac*
  – Interviews with faculty and staff

• Residential Advisory Board
  – RAB Report 2010
  – Meetings with Administrators
  – Discussions with Students
“The intellectual, cultural, and social environment outside of the classroom cannot be divorced from what goes on within, and the University should not, if it could, draw its curtain of concern at the classroom door.”
- The Springer Report, 1965

“...the idea that education is not limited to the classroom, that what happens outside the classroom is also important for education, has been the radical principle of our colleges and universities. The core of educational philosophy has been the belief that a proper conception of education must recognize the effect of the total institutional environment upon the student and address itself to his whole personality.”
- University Life: A Preliminary Report, 1972

“...the University of Pennsylvania should be an institution which sees life whole.”
- Pennsylvania: One University, 1973

“Intellectual labor should be seen to merge seamlessly with intellectual life.”
- David Brownlee, 1989
Alex Duke: College as Quijote

- “the consistent failure of these projects to create small, intimate communities of scholars and students” (174)
What is our mission?
Has it failed?
Has it changed?
Should it have changed?
Three Models (Veysey, Kerr)

• British: education for personal development

• German: research

• American: land grants, education for technical skill
The Cry of the Undergraduate

- 1960s Student Movement
  - Concern with “faceless” education
  - Undergrads demand attention
- Decline of In Loco Parentis
  - What will replace it?
  - Rise of Student Affairs
- Springer Report
  - Student Affairs goes to Provost’s Office
Martin Meyerson
“Having joined in championing the student’s right to plan his own life, free of petty regulations and artificial structures, faculty members have been reluctant to interfere, having assumed that whatever institutional responsibility for student life remained lay elsewhere, primarily with the office of the Vice-Provost for Student Affairs. **It is now clear that the faculty shares equal responsibility.** What we seek through our proposal is a new kind of relationship among the residential student population, the faculty, and the professional staff now charged with monitoring residential life on this campus. Moreover, **we believe that it is the faculty which must provide the initiative**, because we have responsibility for the academic realm, and because the separation of social and intellectual activities is unhealthy for a university.”

-Zemsky et al, 1971
AIM: To establish a residential community composed of undergraduates, teaching fellows, and faculty actively involved in academic and cultural pursuits – in fostering the “life of the mind.” This community would be supplemented by non-resident faculty who have agreed to give time and effort to the project.

FUNCTIONS:
1. To provide an atmosphere which facilitates learning
2. To facilitate faculty-student interactions in an informal and congenial setting
3. To encourage cultural activities such as informal discussion seminars, literary and artistic activities, musical performance and appreciation, photography, and other activities.

We hope that the House will be shaped in most of its functions by its members – it is a place for educational things to happen.
What did they do?

• Residential Faculty
• Informal seminars
• Speaker series
• Communal dining
• Social event planning
• Artistic groups
• (Self-) Selective Admissions
“The Cluster College”

- (Sort of) Harvard and Yale
- UC Santa Cruz
- Claremont Schools
- University of the Pacific

- Small
- Experimental
- Curricular in focus
- Explicitly British
The National Rise of Student Affairs

• Names you know: Astin, Chickering, Boyer, Blimling, Kuh, Pascarella & Terenzini, etc.

• **Student engagement/involvement**

• Promotion of personal development
  – Experiential and environmental focus
  – Democratic civic virtues and cultural exposure

• Outcomes-oriented
Arnold’s Revenge?

“The best that has been thought and said”

is not unlike:

“Experiencing diverse cultures and points of view”
Larger Forces

- Postwar enrollment boom
- Newly residential campus
- Demand for services

- College Houses are an experiment within a larger system
“Shrinking the Psychological Size”

- Sheldon Hackney, Penn President 1981-1993
- “The Undergraduate Experience”
- “The Freshman Experience”
- College Houses: institutionalized, but not prominent
Choice? Or Community?

“[The current system] values choice over community, continuity, and connection. Over the long term...there will be increased cost to making choice the centerpiece of a residential philosophy – the cost to the student will be the loss of academic opportunity and access to technological innovation, while the cost to the institution will be the loss of the student as a fully engaged and fully participating member of the community.”

- VPUL, 1992
Choosing Community

“Academic work and academic life are a seamless whole, and the University’s residential system should foster communities that serve our students’ overlapping academic, co-curricular, social, and personal needs.

[...]The communities must attract and accommodate undergraduates throughout their years of study and further the central academic mission of the University...the housing system must be broad and flexible.”

- “Choosing Community,” 1997
So Where Are We Now?

- **Student Affairs Synthesis**
  - British goal of edification/1960s personalization
  - American goal of popular access
  - German structure as backdrop

- **Equal Opportunity Enrichment**
  - “Minimum level of service”
  - Promotion of academic community
  - Promotion of community, period
Findings

• College Houses are successful when visionary
• They are successful when championed
• The original goal is one among several
• We should differentiate our programs more explicitly to accommodate that variety
2010 RAB Report
A Critical Examination of the College House System at the University of Pennsylvania
Table 1: Riker’s Maslovian Framework

General Objectives for College Student Housing

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<tr>
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<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
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<td>Provision of a satisfactory physical environment through new construction and renovation</td>
<td>Adequate care and maintenance of the physical facilities</td>
<td>Establishment of guidelines that provide structure for compatible and cooperative community living</td>
<td>Development of an interpersonal environment that reflects responsible citizenship and a concern for others, as well as an atmosphere conducive to learning</td>
<td>Opportunities for individual growth and development</td>
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Interpersonal Environment (Student-Oriented)

Physical Environment (Facility-Oriented)

Educational Functions

Management Functions
Table 1

General Objectives for College Student Housing

| Level 1 | Provision of a satisfactory physical environment through new construction and renovation |
| Level 2 | Adequate care and maintenance of the physical facilities |
| Level 3 | Establishment of guidelines that provide for the development of a community living environment |
| Level 4 | Development of an interpersonal environment that reflects responsible citizenship and a concern for others, as well as an atmosphere conducive to learning |
| Level 5 | Opportunities for individual growth and development |

Simpler Maslovian Framework

Personal Development, Scholarly Community

Comfort and Community

Physical Facilities and Consumer Services
Residential Programs:

- Mission
- Accountability
- Oversight
- Funding
- Credit
- Starting and Ending Programs
College House Cup

- Year of Games
- Clearer Standings
- Clearer Structure
- More one-time events
PennPM:

-Wasn’t working
-Redundant
-If we need more alternative programming, concentrate resources
Dining

- Bon Appétit Transition
- Student Feedback
- Hours of Operation
- Dining Dollars
- “Role of Dining in the Penn Community”
46% Will Continue a Dining Plan

- Quality of Food
- Variety of food
- Convenience
- For the social benefits
- Access to sustainable foods
- Access to healthy foods
- Makes financial sense for me
- Other (please specify)
55% Will Not

- Moving Off Campus
- Graduating or studying abroad
- Dining plan does not meet my needs
- Does not make financial sense for me
- Will not be attending University of Pennsylvania
- Other (Please Specify)
Facilities

Repairs Requests
• Don’t need to be more accessible
• Need to be more transparent
• Increase accessibility of data, information about specific requests

Long-Term Maintenance
• College Houses won’t be new and exciting forever
• Need to work closely with Development Office