



# What's Trending in Student Housing?

A senior political science major made the following statement during a recent KSQ student focus group: “When I started college, I had no idea how important my housing experience would be to my overall happiness and success in college. Had I known, I would have placed the quality and style of housing at the top of my criteria when visiting campuses.” Many students (and their parents) do rank housing as a major deciding factor when selecting a university, according to a study by **APPA’s Center for Facilities Research (CFaR)**. From more traditional, freshman-style residence halls to suite-style arrangements and roomier apartments for upperclassmen, student housing today must meet the ever-increasing demands of the modern millennial. With sophisticated tastes and a global perspective, most 21st century college students expect both on and off-campus housing to not only meet their basic living requirements, but also be a place of comfort and style for sleeping, studying and socializing—often with features that make parents wish to be a student all over again.



## Common areas are essential.

Even in today’s world of social media, students still crave the ability to “see and be seen” by their peers. Common spaces are critical for helping build community and a sense of place for students in the formative years of their collegiate experience. When KSQ approaches a new project, one remark we often hear from hall directors and student alike is that they want ample common spaces that are ideal for both structured hall gatherings and general hang-out time. Furnishings, while meeting certain durability standards, must also feel inviting and not so “precious” that a student cannot put his or her feet up and relax for a while.



## Learning spaces aren’t just for academic buildings.

Much of student learning actually happens outside the classroom, and many of the universities we work with are looking for how they can incorporate the living-learning trend on their campus. These spaces must support both quiet, individualized study as well as group collaboration. Whether simply including more white-board-equipped study spaces in an honors hall to actual classrooms and faculty-in-residence apartments in a residential college, KSQ understands that combining academic spaces with living spaces helps many college students engage more in their studies, achieve higher GPAs and remain connected to their university. In fact, a study published in *Research in Higher Education* showed that 35% of students are less likely to leave after their first year than similar students not enrolled in a learning community.



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## Kitchens cook up community.

Just as the kitchen is the hub of today’s homes, the community kitchen fills an important role in traditional freshman or suite-style housing. Students enjoy the camaraderie that comes with baking cupcakes or cookies on a Friday movie night, or cooking the occasional frozen lasagna to share with friends. Even with meal plans and on-campus dining just steps from a residence hall, students want the ability to build relationships over something simple that evokes feelings of home.

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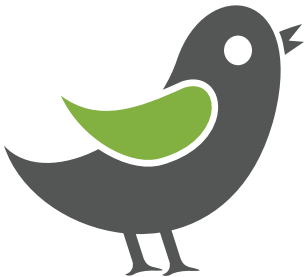


## What's Trending in Student Housing? cont'd.



### Furniture gets wired.

From built-in WiFi and cable to furniture featuring outlets for charging electronics, technology is essential to supporting the needs of today's wired generation. In a 2010 **Pew Research** social trends study, 24% of millennials surveyed said that use of technology is the number one factor that makes their generation unique compared to Gen X or the Baby Boom generation. Flatscreen monitors in living-learning style classrooms help to connect long-distance study groups—or in common areas simply allow students to cheer on their team during an away game. Whether for work or leisure, technology truly is an integral part of the millennial lifestyle students today share.



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### Green is golden.

The millennial set is perhaps more conscientious about the environment than any previous generation. They want to know where their food comes from, how their clothing was made (and by whom) and what chemicals were used to create any given type of product. Sustainable features in student housing not only attract students and their parents, it can also improve health and wellness for occupants and save the university money in utilities and maintenance over the long haul. KSQ looks to include common-sense sustainable features in all of our buildings, whether LEED is a priority or not.



### Safety is in the cards.

Key card access is the standard for entrances at most every residence hall we design—and a growing trend is that student room access is also provided by a card rather than a key. Exterior surveillance cameras combined with adequate lighting for evening and early morning hours increase the safety factor for students and peace of mind for their parents.



### Let the (sun) light in.

Lighting can dictate the mood of a space like no other factor. Our experience has proven time and again that natural light in particular helps to promote a sense of energy and encourages dynamic interaction among students. Whether by including skylights, incorporating glass curtain walls or lighting a dim basement with the help of glass block tiles in the ceiling, the design team at KSQ continually looks for innovative techniques to illuminate a space the old fashioned way.



### Finishes get sophisticated.

Depending upon a university's budget (and geographic location), the per-bed price range typically stretches anywhere from \$40,000 to \$80,000 according to a recent report published in the July 2013 issue of *College Planning and Management*. Our own experience working with universities across the nation confirms these numbers as a typical price range for quality student housing. From the more luxurious quartz countertops, travertine tile and wood-look flooring to low-maintenance stained concrete, there remains a wide-range of options to make residence halls feel inviting while also providing the practical durability required for student life.



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*KSQ is a full-service architectural and interior design firm specializing in creating community through memorable student life spaces—from dynamic dining halls to vibrant student unions and thoughtful residence halls—for university campuses nationwide. To learn more about how we've transformed the student experience through good design, visit us at [ksqarchitects.com](http://ksqarchitects.com).*

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