

Faculty in Residence FAQs

Questions for Residence Life and Student Housing

Does it cost anything to live in the RC's?

No. The Faculty in Residence (FIR) apartment is provided to the faculty member and his or her family at no cost to the faculty member. This includes free basic cable, utilities, internet, and phone services.

What are the requirements of a FiR?

The FIR serves as the intellectual leader of his or her residential commons and works together with the Residential Community Director (RCD) in cultivating and engaging community. Additionally, FIRs are asked to build individual relationships with students, be visible in their communities, and host events for their residents. Each FiR accomplishes this goal in different ways. For a full job description, [click here](#).

What's the parking situation?

Residence Life and Student Housing (RLSH) pays for each FIR to have two designated parking spots near his or her on-campus apartment. FIRs are welcome to purchase an additional parking pass near their academic homes.

Does the housing accommodation count as taxable income?

Because FiRs are required to live on campus, according to the IRS tax code the housing accommodation is not considered taxable income.

What schools would children attend? Is there bus service for children going to school? (local bus stop?)

All of the FIR residences are in the Highland Park ISD (HPISD). A district map can be found [here](#). While HPISD does not have a bus system, both Armstrong Elementary and the middle/intermediate school are a walkable distance from campus (less than one mile). HPISD requires proof of residency. Since the FiRs do not have a lease, RLSH provides a letter of residency for each FiR with children in HPISD.

Can my family and/or partner live with me? Pets?

Yes! As live-on members of the SMU family, it is important that your apartment feel like home. As such, if you have children, partners, or other family members who wish to live with you in your home, they may live with you.

Live-on staff and faculty are allowed one dog or cat weighing less than 25 pounds.

Can we continue to live in halls during breaks? Do we have any responsibilities during breaks?

Live-on faculty are welcome to continue living in the halls during breaks. While there are often FIR related events (Residence Hall Opening, Common Reading, and training) in the few weeks leading up to a semester, there are no responsibilities during the bulk of the break.

Questions for the current Faculty-in-Residence

What's the time commitment?

"The time commitment is relative to the Faculty-in-Residence involvement with his/her specific residential commons community and with the residential commons system in general. Here is an example:

- Weekly: Gathering of your RC's students in your FiR apartment – 1 hour + advertising time + preparation and cleaning time
- Weekly: Meeting with RCD
- Weekly: Meeting with RA/RCD team
- Weekly to monthly: Participate in events held by your own RC and other events held by other RCs
- Monthly: Meeting with FiR team
- Monthly or more: Meetings with any RLSH-affiliated committees to which you are (voluntarily) assigned, attending on-campus and local cultural events with groups of students
- Each semester: Welcoming incoming students
- Yearly: One-day FiR "training" meetings at beginning of school year
- Special: Other events that take a day or two such as RC symposium, site visits by various groups over the course of the year, etc".

~ Beth Wheaton, Cockrell-McIntosh Commons Faculty in Residence

"It is basically a second job, but the time commitment can vary greatly week by week and day by day. The weeks around move-in, homecoming, family weekend, etc. can get very packed. You will also participate in programs planned by the RA's and they may vary in time commitment. There will be weekly RC staff meetings too. All-RC events like the Commons Dinners require our participation, as do some RLSH-wide events. You will also plan and implement your own FiR programs and maybe collaborate with FA's and others. Programs often are in the evening and often start at 8:00 or 9:00 PM when residents are free."

~Robert Krout, Mary Hay, Peyton, and Shuttles (MHPS) Commons Faculty in Residence

"Ten to twelve hours each week on average. Some weeks have more stuff going on and some have less."

~Ann Batenburg, Virginia-Snider Commons Faculty in Residence

“The time commitment is substantial, I think, if you’re doing the job right. You are essentially on call 24/7. That said, “on call” turns out to be very lightweight. The students give you plenty of space. Any disciplinary issues go to the RCD, RLSH, and RA staff, leaving only the pleasant interactions with students for the most part. There are the occasional difficult conversations with a student who seeks help with an issue, but mostly it is like being a grandparent – you do the fun things with them, and if there’s trouble it goes to someone else.”

~Tom Tunks, Ware Commons Faculty in Residence

What events do you put together?

- “Weekly gathering in your FiR apartment for your RC’s students
- Work with RA/RCD team and Commons Council teams to put together events
- Co-sponsored events with other RCs
- Co-sponsored events with other organizations on (or off) campus”

~ Beth Wheaton, Cockrell-McIntosh Commons Faculty in Residence

“I collaborate with RA’s, FA’s, Commons Council, and others on programs as well as plan and implement my own weekly. Sometimes residents approach me to do a program like having a baking night in my apt. I participate in basically all of the RC programs unless unable to because of my teaching schedule. I schedule my events month by month and circulate a calendar of events to residents and via RA’s – I advertise on our social media too.”

~Robert Krout, Mary Hay, Peyton, and Shuttles (MHPS) Commons Faculty in Residence

- “Weekly event – Sunday Night Snacks
- Monthly events – Harry Potter Book Club, Celebrity Chef Dinners
- Impromptu events – attending the intramural soccer match tonight, the National Night out, Boulevarding, etc – things that come up each week that I want to attend
- Commons Traditions – each Commons has traditions that we help plan and attend”

~Ann Batenburg, Virginia-Snider Commons Faculty in Residence

"We have three levels of events in Ware. (1) There is a weekly Salon (8:00 p.m. Sundays), which is informal, with a special guest each time (e.g., President and Mrs. Turner, the Provost, VP Student Affairs, successful SMU alumni/ae, Director of Engaged Learning, coaches), refreshments prepared by our resident Gourmet Group. No prepared presentations or speeches (they get enough of that in classes), just mix and mingle; (2) There are group trips to see/hear events on or off campus – concerts, lectures, theatre or dance performances – often accompanied by dinner and meeting the director or presenter of the event. Usually 5-10 students participate – sometimes more; (3) *ad hoc* "runouts" to boating, biking, hiking places. These are usually last-minute events with an email announcement such as, "We're going to XXXX. The first ten people to reply to this are able to go with us."

~Tom Tunks, Ware Commons Faculty in Residence

Are family allowed to participate in the events with students?

"Families are encouraged to attend most events put on the by RCs. This can be difficult when some of the events are planned for late weekday hours due to students' schedules."

~ Beth Wheaton, Cockrell-McIntosh Commons Faculty in Residence

What is it like to have kids as FiR?

"Heidi and I have a 12 year old son and a 9 year old daughter. They had some trouble initially adjusting to the move because they missed our house and having a backyard and a private garden. However, they made the adjustment just fine and now they really like living on campus. It's great they are able to attend the very reputable HPISD schools, and they made new friends quickly. For the most part, they keep to themselves during our various FiR activities, but they like participating in our weekly small group dinners with residents. I think the residents like seeing our kids around, because for a lot of them it makes them feel more at home. Not too long ago we asked our son if he would move back to our former home in Plano if the opportunity arose, and he said 'No.'"

~David Son, Boaz Commons Faculty in Residence

"We have two young kids (4 as of today, not-quite-3-yet when we first moved in). They didn't really have any issues adjusting to the new place, and in fact were excited to have their own rooms (which they did not at the house from which we moved). And they have generally loved being in the college environment, interacting with a lot of people, and taking part in some of the on-campus events. A lot of the college students also really enjoy talking or playing with them - it's also a good social icebreaker.

“The only major kid-specific downside of life on campus has been the trek to/from the garage, which isn't a big deal for an adult but is a slow process with kids (if we let them walk it can take up to 10 minutes to make it from the garage to our building). We quite often just put them in a two-seater wagon and pull them since it's a lot faster - but it is inconvenient to have to bring a wagon everywhere. Luckily precipitation is relatively infrequent in Dallas, but on rainy/snowy days when we're trying to get the kids (walking or in wagon) between our building and the garage we definitely miss the attached garage at our house (and the couple times I've gotten to the car only to realize I left something in the building, and had to lug the kids back to the building then back out again are NOT fun).

“The one other aspect I would say is important to be aware of regarding having kids as a FiR is it makes aspects of your job more difficult. Because we always have to have someone with the kids, and they need a fairly regimented schedule, we have a lot less schedule flexibility than some of the other FiRs. This isn't a huge deal with most things - we can arrange our schedules ahead of time to accommodate an event, or hire a babysitter if needed, but largely eliminates the possibility of spontaneous outings or get-togethers; it's even hard to just go hang out with students in the lounge during the day since we need to keep an eye on the kids and they get restless quickly.”

~Mark Kerins, Morrison-McGinnis Commons Faculty in Residence

What is it like to have pets as a FiR?

“The students love having the pets on-campus. It requires a well-behaved pet that can be around many people as well as handle the chaos that can, and does, happen without notice. Calculate the time it will take to take care of your pet. Give yourself a little extra time because small-to-large crises happen regularly.”

~ Beth Wheaton, Cockrell-McIntosh Commons Faculty in Residence

What can I expect it be like to live in a residential commons as compared to an apartment or house? In relation to noise? Fire alarms? Fire safety? Facilities?

“If you are a light sleeper, you may have some issues since the students' schedules may be the reverse of yours. I recommend going to the floor meetings at the beginning of the semester to

introduce yourself, your family, and your pets so the students know with whom they are sharing space. The RA on-call is a good resource if you have problems with noisy students.

“The fire alarm will most likely go off at some point. Have a plan in place of how to evacuate yourself, your family, and your pet. I recommend going to be WITH the students in the designated area so that they can see you are all one big community and how much burned popcorn affects everyone.

“Fire safety measures are in place for the RC, but you will need to make arrangements for a pet left in your home while you work. The RCD may be the best source of security with whom to establish this safeguard.

“Ah, Facilities! There is a system in place to upload your facilities requests. Use this at the first sign of trouble. Have your facilities manager’s phone number of speed dial, just in case. If the problem is not fixed to YOUR OWN specifications, keep on requesting it to be fixed the way you want it fixed until it is actually fixed.”

~ Beth Wheaton, Cockrell-McIntosh Commons Faculty in Residence

“You are in a community and have to enjoy seeing and interacting with residents daily. They can (and do) knock on the door at unexpected times to come in to chat, pet the kitties, etc. That is what we want – that sense of approachability.

- Noise: Loud at times, but not too bad
 - Fire Alarms: Yes, twice a semester, but we get advance warning
 - Fire Safety: Yep, gotta follow the guidelines
 - Facilities work: Most of the time :}

~Robert Krout, Mary Hay, Peyton, and Shuttles (MHPS) Commons Faculty in Residence

- Noise – same as any apartment building – occasionally hear noise in the hallway, water flowing from upstairs toilets flushing or showers running – really peaceful most of the time. Boulevarding and special events are the obvious exceptions.
- Fire Alarms – (knocking on wood) only 1-2 drills each semester and haven’t had too many burned-popcorn-real-alarm situations so far
- Fire Safety – hasn’t impacted me at all
- Facilities work? – this can be a challenge. There is work done in the buildings over breaks on occasion, and I have no control over what needs to be done or when. For example, this summer I had 10 days off and just did a stay-cation. During that time, VS was rewiring the whole building

for it fire alarms and testing the fire alarm over several days. It was a trying couple of days with the alarm going off at intervals and one day, several men had to spend several hours in my apartment. The guys are always respectful and friendly. You just have no control over scheduling this stuff. In some units, heating and AC don't work like a regular house. You have little control over your thermostat. On the positive side, if you need anything done, you have an entire department to come fix your faucet or hang a shelf.

~Ann Batenburg, Virginia-Snider Commons Faculty in Residence

Not much noise at all (except for the air handlers). Our apartment is placed pretty far away from student rooms and gathering places. Fire alarms are infrequent, but do occur. We've had only one non-practice alarm this semester thus far.

We haven't had any problem with facilities work. Just turn in a ticket, and it's usually handled in a reasonable time.

~Tom Tunks, Ware Commons Faculty in Residence
