

## Frequently Asked Questions about Open Housing

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- **What is Open Housing?**

*Open Housing, also sometimes called gender-neutral housing, is a policy which allows second-, third- and fourth-year College students the choice of living with other second-, third- or fourth-year students, regardless of gender. The Office of Undergraduate Student Housing will not assign anyone to an opposite-sex roommate unless requested. The policy goes into effect as a pilot program in January 2009, with full implementation expected in the Fall of 2009.*

- **Why did the University of Chicago implement a gender-neutral housing option?**

*In May 2007, the Inter-House Council—the student governing body for the House System—completed a resolution requesting the implementation of a policy that would permit students to select a roommate of any gender. There are some students for whom traditional, same-sex room assignments are not ideal or appropriate, and we believe it is important that housing policies evolve to meet the needs of students to create an inclusive, welcoming environment.*

- **What process was used to develop the Open Housing option?**

*After reviewing the resolution passed by the Inter-House Council, the Director of Undergraduate Student Housing convened a committee of students and staff to study the implementation of a gender-neutral option at the University. The committee consulted with multiple constituencies, most importantly with students and staff living in campus housing. In March 2008, the committee recommended that Chicago implement a gender-neutral housing option for second-, third- and fourth- year College students. Kim Goff-Crews, Vice-President and Dean of Students in the University, approved this recommendation in November 2008.*

- **Who will be able to apply for Open Housing?**

*This option will be available only to second-, third- and fourth-year College students. Open Housing will not be an option for first-year students.*

- **Can a first-year student live in an Open Housing room?**

*If incoming students indicate on their housing applications that their needs cannot be met within the parameters of the College's room-assignment policies, the Office of Undergraduate Student Housing will work with that student until an acceptable solution is determined.*

- **Will you prevent people who are romantically involved from living together?**

*The Open Housing option is not intended for romantic couples. However, we respect and honor the privacy of our students, so current open housing procedures do not require students to disclose the reason for their roommate requests.*

- **Is this a permanent change in policy?**

*The policy will be approached in a spirit of continuous review and evaluation, as are all new policies at Chicago. It will be implemented as a pilot program in January 2009, and we expect full implementation in Fall 2009. A formal review of the policy will be held in Fall 2010.*

- **What if a student does not want to live in a community where Open Housing is offered?**

*The University also offers single-sex housing, and that option will remain available. There are six Houses where single-sex housing will be available for students who prefer that option. Open Housing will not be implemented in those locations.*

- **What if parents don't want their child to live in an open housing room?**

*We encourage students to maintain an open dialogue with their families. Students over the age of 18 are legally able to make decisions about their housing contracts. Students under 18 should discuss housing plans with their families, as they must provide parental consent.*

- **What if someone who requested an Open Housing room decides they no longer want to live in that room?**

*Students may request room changes by visiting the Office of Undergraduate Student Housing and completing a General Waitlist request. The student will not be required to move into another Open Housing room unless they wish.*

- **How many Open Housing rooms are available and where will they be?**

*There is no specific number, or limit, of Open Housing rooms on campus. Open Housing will exist across the housing system except in those Houses that are designated as single-sex. Our priority is to meet the individual needs of our diverse student community.*

- **Can you estimate how many students who will choose to live in Open Housing rooms?**

*Because we do not have experience with this policy yet it is hard to estimate precisely how many students will choose the Open Housing option. A number of other institutions that have implemented a gender-neutral housing policy report that around 2-4% of their student rooms are selected as gender-neutral rooms.*

- **What other institutions offer a gender-neutral housing option?**

*Dozens of institutions have implemented gender-neutral housing policies, including Carnegie-Mellon University, Brown University, Dartmouth College, New York University, Princeton University, Stanford University, Washington University in St. Louis, Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania. The policies and experiences of these and other institutions were helpful in guiding our decision-making.*

