

*Spaces & Experiences*

**CHESTNUT RESIDENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)**

November 18<sup>th</sup> | 9:30 - 10:15 AM

Armoury Suite, Chestnut Residence

Meeting Minutes

**IN ATTENDANCE**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Steve Masse	Dean of Residence and Director of Student Life
Aisalyn Templin	Administration and Communications Assistant (Secretary)
Alicia Whitfield	Manager, Residence Admissions
Andrea Nelson	Rooms Manager
Antoni Wachelka	Resident
Derrick Gravener	Associate Dean, Residence Life (Chair)
Dhruva Rau	Resident
Lucy Chandler	Residence Administration and Project Coordinator
Matthew Mifsud	Facilities Coordinator
Makena Zimmerman	Residence Life Coordinator
Mumtaz Ahmetoglu	Resident
Nabila Preema	Resident
Nina Kinoshita	Residence Council President
Rubaina Farin	Chestnut Residence Don
Theo Corts	Resident
Tulgar Ihan	Chestnut Student Lounge Manager

**REGRETS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Arjan Grover	Resident
Kevin Dancy	Director of Residence Operations
Nathan Sheng	Resident
Yashvit Danini	Chestnut Residence Lead Don



## **AGENDA**

- Welcome and Introductions
- Terms of Reference
- Admissions Report
- Facilities Project Updates
- 2026-27 Draft Residence Fees
- Residence Council Updates
- Other business

***Note:** this meeting was chaired by Derrick Gravener, Associate Dean, Residence Life*

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## **WELCOME**

All participants introduced themselves and participated in the icebreaker discussion topic.

A Land Acknowledgement was shared with the Committee ([see slide 2](#)).

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## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Derrick Gravener presented an overview of the purpose of the Terms of Reference. There were no questions, and there was no discussion ([see slides 6-7](#))

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## **ADMISSIONS REPORT**

Alicia Whitfield presented an overview of the occupancy statistics, as well as the demographic composition of the building for the current academic year. ([see slides 9 - 11](#))

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## **FACILITIES AND PROJECT UPDATES**

Matthew Mifsud highlighted the current facilities projects updates ([see slide 13](#)). Andrea Nelson highlighted that the facilities team aims to limit the projects that would disrupt residents during the academic year. They try to limit larger scale projects to the summer, when they can take entire floors offline.

Derrick will transition to the role of Manager, Residence Administration in January. As part of this new position, he will be looking to update the equipment in the gym. A student asked whether we could purchase a full set of weights. Andrea responded that often, the weights will be found in student rooms at the end of the year. An external vendor came in to look at updating the equipment recently. There will be more capacity next term to ensure that the gym is updated. Students should send us an email with concerns.

Steven asked Matthew what we are hoping to achieve with the new lighting system. Matthew responded that it would provide a more modern look, with more consistent lighting.



Staff have heard from residents that the 28<sup>th</sup> floor is not serving students, and we are in the process of soliciting quotes from a designer. There should be an opportunity for students to help co-create what the space will look like. This includes what furnishings will fill the space.

A Residence Don asked if the door from the stairwell to the third floor would be open and accessible. There is some concern about Conference guests being able to access the student floors. Steven responded that we investigated this, and the fire prevention team said we cannot put a lock on the door in case of a fire. Derrick asked about whether there could be an emergency-only bar placed on the door. In the past, Steven said these suggestions were vetoed for fire safety reasons.

Andrea commented that when Dons do their rounds, they put things through StarRez if they are concerned. Students will often file a work order and also go down to the Front Desk. Matthew said that if the concern is an emergency, then staff will address this as soon as possible. If there is a life-safety issue, even if it is overnight, they should report to security and maintenance that can be available.



Several students have commented that there are many issues with elevator number five. Matthew says that he will investigate this.

Makena Zimmerman highlighted that a maintenance request can be completed for common spaces as well.

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## **2026-27 DRAFT RESIDENCE FEES**

Steven Masse drew attention to the Draft Residence Fees for the 2026-27 Academic year ([see slide 15](#)). He explained that, when proposing these rates, we consider what we need to charge to continue investing in the infrastructure and maintaining the building. Other considerations include affordability and the rates at other residences.

The Service Ancillary Review Group ([SARG](#)) will discuss the proposed fee increase in January before it is put forward for formal approval at the University Affairs Board.

Chestnut residence requires significant capital investment. To repair, millions of dollars are required, including the high voltage room. There are three categories of rates for the summer, and three for the academic year.

Capital investments include more significant investments. The long term is beyond ten years. Medium term is typically three to five years. Chestnut residence does not currently have reserves for these kinds of projects. The annual capital spend can vary quite a bit. At the RAC meeting in January, Sangeeta and Kevin will present the schedule of capital investment and what we are anticipating.



Steven described the need to replace the lock system; it is difficult to replace parts because they are not making them anymore. A student asked what the projects might cost. Steven indicated that similar projects elsewhere on campus suggest that it may cost upwards of \$2 million. Costs have increased drastically in the past few years.

Matthew explained that we need a replacement for the generator. There is typically a useful life of 25 years. Depending on the economic situation, costs can vary, and pricing is in flux. Cost consultants provide an estimate, but it can still vary by as much as 25%.

All ancillary operations are self-funded; under normal circumstances, the University does not subsidize residence operations.

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## **RESIDENCE COUNCIL**

Nina Kinoshita highlighted that there have been unusual circumstances this term. As a result, she has only been working as President since mid-October. She expects that following an upcoming election, the council will have full members. She suggested that they spend the money on equipment instead of events this year. If they do hold events, they may be smaller.

Steven explained that, typically, residence councils invest in items that staff cannot. This includes equipment that improves the student's experience, but we cannot protect these items because there is a chance of them going missing. When there is community ownership, items may be less likely to disappear.

Nina is looking for more opportunities to hear from students and what their needs are. Some students are only aware of the council when they do the annual semi-formal event. A Don suggested that we provide more visibility for the residence council, so that students have more awareness, and they know who is involved. This could include pop-up events, like the ones that Dons are running in December.

Makena suggested that Nina work closely with Jessi Sidhu, to better integrate into the building. There could be possibilities for collaboration in the building. There may be more clarity around the partnership when we meet in January.

A student commented that some residents treat the building as a hotel, as it is further from the main campus. Makena suggested that residents connect with the Residence Life Office to look at building new traditions and events. We are looking to build a stronger Chestnut identity. Involvement greatly improves student experience.

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## **OTHER BUSINESS**



A student asked if there are partners that Chestnut must purchase from, for example, gym equipment. Staff replied that there is a new policy that requires us to purchase from Ontario-based vendors wherever possible.

A student asked how residents who use the Student Lounge can learn about what equipment is available to borrow. Staff suggested that this space represents a good opportunity to capture students' attention with posters. To increase awareness of what is available for student use, a poster placed in the Student Lounge could outline what we have, and how items can be borrowed. PS5 controls are available, but this is not heavily emphasized. For example, students know there is a projector, but don't know if they can sign-out the PS4.

Staff discussed the usefulness of other forms of communication. Makena suggested that information about what is available for students to borrow could be included in the upcoming newsletter. Derrick asked whether people would be more likely to read printed newsletters. A student commented that it will be looked at more than an e-newsletter. Staff commented that students may avoid emails that are not related to academics. Andrea suggested that information could be posted near the elevators, places where students wait and are more of a captive audience. People have to look at something, so this is a good opportunity.

Steven mentioned that the University used to regularly host Communication Summits. There is not one method that works for everyone. The strategy should be multi-pronged. We should think about how we communicate in each place. We can think of more targeted initiatives. This could include thinking creatively about how to educate and make people aware of what is available to them, such as tabling and door knocking. Derrick said that we are looking at using TV screens for communication.

A student asked whether we could add noise cancellation to the music rooms? There is an issue that if someone is playing the drums, this prohibits another resident from playing an instrument in another space. Matthew says this would involve a sizeable renovation project. Matthew says that to prevent noise transferring, you need to build multiple walls. This cannot be resolved quickly or cheaply. A student suggested that there are temporary soundproofing boards that can be used. There could be cheaper alternatives that don't involve tearing down walls. Steven said that this can be helpful, but it will not be soundproof. This may not be an urgent concern, but a temporary solution would be appreciated. There is currently a gap under the door, so improving this, with the use of a door sweep could help as well.

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## **NEXT MEETING**

We aim to have another meeting in January and March.

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