

Studying in the US: Where To Live?

This is the VOA Special English Education Report.

March Madness is the name for the busy championship season in American college basketball. But March also means another kind of madness -- the nervous wait for admissions letters from colleges and universities.

This week in our Foreign Student Series, we jump ahead to the subject of where to live. Housing policies differ from school to school. Some schools have limited housing or none at all.

Dormitory buildings might house a small number of students or many hundreds. Some dorms have suites. A suite has several bedrooms, a common area and a bathroom. Other dorms have rooms along a common hallway. Two, three or four students might share a room.

Males and females often live on different floors of the same building. Or they might live on the same floor, or in some cases even share a suite if permitted. But single-sex housing is usually also available.

Different groups and organizations such as fraternities and sororities might have their own houses where their members live. And there is often housing for married students.

Some dorms are nice, others are not so nice. But many students say they like the chance to make friends and be near their classes.

Cost is another consideration. Dorms can cost less than off-campus housing. But school-owned housing can also cost more, though the price may include meals.

Here are some questions to ask before making a decision: How much privacy can a student expect? Will the school provide a single room if a student requests one? Will the school provide a special diet if a student needs one? And are any dorms open all year so international students can have a place to stay during long vacations?

Kirsten Kennedy, housing director at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, says all first-year undergraduates there have to live in a dorm. After that, they are free to seek other housing.

Students can apply to become resident assistants after living in the dorms for a year. International students can also apply to become resident assistants after a year in the dorms.

Working as a resident assistant in student housing is one way to help finance an education. At many schools, RAs earn money as well as get their room and meals for free or at a reduced price.

And that's the VOA Special English Education Report, written by Nancy Steinbach. Our Foreign Student Series is online at voaspecialenglish.com. I'm Steve Ember.



A dormitory at the University of South Carolina in Columbia