FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- **What are my options for housing off-campus?**
  - VCU does not own nor operate any of the properties off campus.
  - VCU cannot promote nor demote any property.
  - Our office can assist you with:
    - understanding the leasing process
    - identifying your budget
    - identifying properties that meet your needs
    - resolving issues with roommates, landlords and/or neighbors
  - There are two types of leases available:
    - A joint lease is a lease signed by all tenants, making the entire group responsible for the total rent, damages, and any fees. This places the responsibility of dividing rent and utilities and the choice of filling empty bedrooms in the unit on the tenants themselves.
    - An individual lease is when a tenant signs for a single room, meaning they are individually responsible for paying rent and any damage fees associated with the room. However, this may also mean the landlord can place any tenant in remaining rooms in the unit – be sure to ask about this before signing your lease. Please note that the properties that offer individual leases tend to be very popular with VCU’s undergraduate population.

- **Why can’t I find a 9 months leases?**
  - The majority of all leases off campus are for 12 months.
    - Please note that you can move out early as long as you give your landlord notice, however you will still be responsible for the rental payments until the end of your lease.
  - If you are looking for something shorter you may be able to work something out with the landlord, however they will typically charge you an additional fee to do so.

- **How do leases work?**
  - The process can be rather complicated; thus we would recommend that you attend one of our Rental Workshops to learn about the process.
    - The rental workshop will walk you step-by-step through the process of finding and then renting your first apartment. You’ll learn about deposits, leases, budgets, tenant/landlord rights and much more!
    - Rental Workshops are held on Wednesdays at 2pm via Zoom at [https://vcu.zoom.us/j/8048284514](https://vcu.zoom.us/j/8048284514)
  - Alternatively, we can meet with you one on one. Please feel free to schedule an appointment with me by visiting [https://vcuoffcampus.youcanbook.me/](https://vcuoffcampus.youcanbook.me/). Meetings can be scheduled from 8-5pm Monday-Friday, or 8-10pm Sunday-Thursday.
BUDGET RELATED

- Can I use financial aid to pay my off-campus expenses?
  - Maybe
  - You will only receive a refund if there is an excess in your financial aid award. If you receive an award that covers your VCU tuition and fees, then you can use the excess towards your rent and other living expenses.
  - For example, if your package is $20,000 (which may consist of scholarships, grants, work study and loans), the money would be split up into two payments, one for fall semester and one for the spring semester. So VCU would get $10,000 a semester. VCU would then take out roughly $7,000+ for tuition and fees and then give the remaining $3,000 to you via direct deposit or check.
  - Refunds could be disbursed by VCU as late as end of September/early October and late January/early February, depending on if all deadlines were met, thus you will need to plan ahead to cover your housing costs until the refund is deposited into your account.
  - Please note that if your financial aid package includes $3,000 for Work Study, that money will have to be earned by applying for and working in a Work Study position for an average of 10 hours a week throughout the year.
  - For more details, please contact Financial Aid at (804) 828-6669 or http://finaid.vcu.edu/.
  - If you’d like to meet to discuss your situation, I would love to create a plan with you. Please feel free to schedule an appointment with me by visiting https://vcuoffcampus.youcanbook.me/ Meetings can be scheduled from 8-5pm Monday-Friday, or 8-10pm Sunday-Thursday.

- What is the average cost per student after utilities per month for off campus housing?
  - It depends greatly on the number of bedrooms/ tenants.
    - 1 Tenant - 1 Bedroom Unit - $1200+
    - 2 Tenants - 2 Bedroom Unit - ~$800+
    - 3 Tenants - 3 Bedroom Unit - ~$700+
    - 4 Tenants - 4 Bedroom Unit - ~$650+
    - 2 Tenants - 1 Bedroom Unit - $600+
    - 4 Tenants - 2 Bedroom Unit - ~$400+
    - 6 Tenants - 3 Bedroom Unit - ~$350+
    - 8 Tenants - 4 Bedroom Unit - ~$325+
• If utilities are not included how much should I budget for?
  o Electricity
    ▪ Estimate $100-$150 a unit per month
    ▪ Please keep in mind the cost may double in the January and August due to the weather
    ▪ There is a $14.10 one-time connection fee and ~$250 one-time refundable deposit due at set up with Dominion Energy.
    ▪ How do I set up my electricity account?
      • Start by visiting https://www.dominionenergy.com/contact-us/manage-account-support
  o Internet
    ▪ Estimate $70-$90 a unit per month, depending on speed and company.
    ▪ This does not include any set up fees
  o Water, Trash and Sewer
    ▪ Estimate $90 a unit per month
    ▪ How do I set up my water account?
      • If you are in the Richmond City limits - Call (804)646-4646 between 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, to have your gas or water service turned on, transferred, or disconnected, preferably three to five days before service is needed. Be at the service location on the scheduled date and time for service installation. or visit http://www.richmondgov.com/PublicUtilities/WhatDoIDoIf.asp
COVID RELATED

- **What is expected of me as I return to campus?**
  - Complete the Return to Campus student training in Blackboard. Visit the Return to Campus website at students.vcu.edu/rtc-student for more information.
  - Monitor your health daily. Complete a daily health survey at dailyhealth.vcu.edu. Testing will occur according to protocols.
  - Wear a face covering or mask in common areas.
  - Apply physical distance guidelines to all settings.
  - Clean and disinfect personal and shared spaces before and after use. Cleaning supplies will be available in numerous locations.
  - Report symptoms associated with COVID-19 to VCU Student Health Services. A call center hotline will be available later in the summer.

- **What should I do if I start to experience symptoms?**
  - Contact University Student Health Services as soon as possible via phone at (804) 828-8828 for the Monroe Park Campus or 804.828.9220 for the MCV Campus.

- **What should I do if I have been in contact with someone that has tested positive?**
  - Contact University Student Health Services as soon as possible via phone at (804) 828-8828 for the Monroe Park Campus or 804.828.9220 for the MCV Campus.

- **Will I be able to move on campus if I test positive for COVID 19?**
  - No, Residential Life and Housing only has room for those with a preexisting VCU Housing contract.

- **Will I be able to move on campus if my roommate tests positive for COVID 19?**
  - No, Residential Life and Housing only has room for those with a preexisting VCU Housing contract.

- **Will we be able to end our lease if the university closes?**
  - No, each lease is a binding contract between the tenants and the landlord, thus VCU does not have the ability to release you from your lease.

- **Will OCSS help me to find someone to take over my lease?**
  - Yes, please contact us at offcampus@vcu.edu for more assistance.
VICTION ASSISTANCE

- Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP)
  - The RMRP is designed to support and ensure housing stability across the commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on availability of funds and household need, the RMRP may provide financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments for eligible households. This includes financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments past due beginning April 1, 2020 and onward. Financial assistance is a one-time payment with opportunity for renewal based on availability of funding and the household’s need for additional assistance and continued eligibility.
  - In short, one of the following must apply to you:
    - You have been laid off.
    - You place of employment has closed.
    - You have experienced a reduction in hours of work.
    - You must stay home to care for children due to closure of day care and/or school.
    - You have lost child or spousal support.
    - You have been unable to find employment due to COVID-19.
    - You are unwilling or unable to participate in their previous employment due their high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
  - And your rent, before utilities, must be less than the following limits:
    - Studio - $1348
    - One Bedroom - $1398
    - Two Bedroom - $1592 ($796 per person)
    - Three Bedroom - $2115 ($705 per person)
    - Four Bedroom - $2529 ($633 per person)
  - For more information please visit: https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/RMRPEligibility/
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Dean of Students Office

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