

To: Joseph Shepherd, Vice President of Student Affairs

From: Advisory Committee on Residential Life

Diandra Almasco (Blacker House president), Sarah Crucilla (IHC Chair), Catherine Day (Avery House president), Kevin Gilmartin (faculty and dean of undergraduate students), Tom Mannion (senior director of student activities and programs), Rachael Morton (former IHC Chair), Richard Murray (faculty), Antonio Rangel (faculty, ACRL chair), Candace Rypisi (director of student-faculty programs), Sakthi Vetrivel (ASCIT president), Jarrid Whitney (admissions director)

Date: April 24, 2018

Subject: Recommendations on the number of beds to be reserved for incoming freshmen and related procedural issues

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## INTRODUCTION

This report provides recommendations on the number of beds to be reserved for incoming freshmen in Fall 2018 across all houses and residences, as well as several related procedural issues.

We highlight three guiding principles that continue to play a key role in shaping our recommendations. First, our desire is to identify processes that maximize the residential life experience for Caltech undergraduates. Second, we seek to do this by relying on incremental changes and evidence-based approaches. We view our work as an ongoing process of trying things out, seeing what works, and using data to guide future updates to the system. Thus, the recommendations outlined here will be re-evaluated yearly, and we expect that we will learn ways to improve upon them based on experience. Third, given the important role that Bechtel will play in undergraduate residential life going forward, we have favored policies that give the new residence a good chance at being successful in the initial years.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 1. Reserve 245 beds for incoming freshmen in Fall 2018.**

The mean number of freshmen over the last five years has been 237, with a standard deviation of 8.12. We recommend reserving 245 beds to accommodate the possibility of a larger than average incoming class.

If less than 245 freshmen arrive in the Fall, the unused beds will become available to continuing students. If this happens, the ACRL will make recommendations about the allocation of these extra beds, in consultation with the IHC and the Housing Office, with the goal of maximizing the preferences of the incoming students and balancing the number of freshmen across all houses and residences.

**Recommendation 2. Allocate the 245 beds across houses and residences according to column 2 in the following table:**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of freshmen beds</b>	<b>For reference: freshmen number in 2017-2018</b>
Avery	33	37
Blacker	24	27
Dabney	19	22
Fleming	25	29
Lloyd	28	31
Page	30	34
Ricketts	20	23
Ruddock	30	34
Bechtel	36	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>237</b>

The rationale for these allocations is as follows:

- In order for freshmen to be able to bond with others in their class, there must be a critical mass of incoming students living in their residence. We recommend an initial target of 36 for Bechtel in order to reach that minimal critical mass. We expect that this target will be adjusted in future years as we learn more about students preferences for Bechtel.
- The remaining freshmen beds are allocated to the houses proportional to the number of freshman that they had in 2017-2018, with a minor correction to comply with the requirement that the North houses should have an even number of beds reserved since they only have double rooms.

**Recommendation 3. Reserve the two 12-person and the two 6-person suites in Bechtel as freshmen dedicated spaces. Reserve PA rooms near these suites.**

The committee is hopeful that putting incoming students in these suites will improve the freshman experience and support system in Bechtel for the freshmen, especially during the early years of the residence. For these same reasons, we recommend that the Housing Office reserves single rooms for PAs near the freshmen suites. In addition, note that these two types of suites were not requested by continuing students for next year.

**Recommendation 4. Students with unaffiliated status will have priority in selecting rooms in Bechtel/MB as continuing students.**

The Caltech housing process distinguishes between two types of students: those affiliated with one of the eight houses, and those unaffiliated. Students affiliated with a house have full membership and are able to participate in the room pick process for that house as continuing students. In contrast, students unaffiliated with a house cannot pick rooms in any house. Unaffiliated students are those who do not have affiliation with any of the eight houses.

Since unaffiliated students only have housing options in Bechtel, Marks-Braun, or non-CIT housing, these students will be given preference in future room picks for Bechtel and Marks-Braun due to the new four year residency requirement.

**Recommendation 5. The rotation process should allow for the possibility of some freshmen living in Bechtel during their first year while also receiving full house membership as part of the rotation outcome.**

This recommendation is based two important concerns:

First, given Recommendation 4, the number of beds in Bechtel and Marks-Braun for continuing students decreases one-to-one with the number of unaffiliated students. This conflicts with the goal of affording every Caltech undergraduate a variety of residential experiences during their time here, including the unique opportunities provided by Bechtel regarding suite and themed housing experiences. This recommendation addresses our goal by reducing the steady-state number of unaffiliated students.

Second, since this is the first year of Bechtel, there is considerable uncertainty about the preferences of incoming freshmen. For example, we don't know how many will prefer to remain unaffiliated from the outset. As a result, we could end up with a sizable number of incoming students who want to be part of a house, but are asked to live in Bechtel during their freshman year. Although these students could potentially apply for full membership in a house and move there after their freshman year, the process of applying for full membership is time consuming and requires a high level of commitment in forming personal relationships with the members of that house. Thus, this recommendation reduces this risk by allowing freshmen who really want a

house affiliation to receive one from the outset, even if they end up living in Bechtel during their first year.

We are working on the details for how these additional house memberships will be determined during the rotation process. These details will be described on our next report on rotation revamp.