I. Policy

A binding contractual lease relationship exists between the University and those students living in residence halls. As the institution is committed to the quality of life in the community and within the institution, it is a privilege to live in the residence halls. The University is also committed to fostering responsible, adult behavior within a community setting. The following regulations are part of the contract and are designed to enhance residence hall life for all students. The University provides single undergraduate and graduate/family housing on campus, which is available according to the eligibility, regulations and procedures outlined below.

II. Procedure

A. Eligibility

USC Columbia is committed to the educational development of its students in the classroom and in the residence halls, with the residence hall program contributing to the educational objectives of the University. As such, the University requires all first-year students to live on campus as long as space is available. The University may make exceptions to this policy, for a year or a semester. Students may receive exemption status based upon marital status, commuting status, military status, non-traditional age, or medical circumstances. Requests for exemption are made to University Housing, hereafter referred to as "Housing." Eligibility for housing is limited to University students and approved visiting students (Gamecock Gateway) who have completed both the registration and program filing processes, have made all required payments by the payment deadlines, and are enrolled on a full-time basis. Some part-time students may also be eligible, providing they meet the requirements for special enrollment as defined by the University Registrar and/or the Office of Student Disability Services.

Eligibility for residence on campus does not equal a guarantee of housing. Students must meet all requirements and deadlines in order to be considered for a room assignment.
Priority to live in University residence halls is given to students carrying a normal course load. Any undergraduate who is enrolled for fewer than 12 credit hours may be required to vacate. Requests for remaining in campus housing must be presented to the director of administration or designee at 1520 Devine Street.

Any person required to register under Article 7, Sex Offender Registry, is prohibited from living in campus student housing (SC Code of Laws Ann. 23-3-465 (2005). In the event it is determined that any person in campus student housing is subject to the above, law enforcement officials and appropriate University officials will be informed, and the housing contract will be deemed null and void and terminated immediately without refund.

The housing contract is for an entire academic year and all room charges will be assessed on the student account. The University reserves the right to cancel contracts with residents who do not abide by University rules as specified in the Code of Student Conduct, University Policy STAF 6.26 (e.g., violation of drug policies) and Housing regulations (e.g., destruction of housing property). Residents may not be entitled to a refund of rental fees if removed for the above reasons or suspended from the University for disciplinary reasons. Refunds in such cases are subject to approval by the Director of Administration or his/her designee and will be applied to the student account.

B. Applications

New first-year and transfer students should complete the online housing application by May 1. Information on how to apply is distributed by the Admissions Office with other matriculation materials.

Continuing students currently living on campus (or who lived on campus before leaving for an approved spring study abroad) should register for the room selection process, held each spring, to select housing for the next academic year by mid-February.

Students going through the readmission process, returning from a fall study abroad, currently living off campus or who failed to register for the room selection process should submit a housing application online no later than mid-February for the fall semester and early December for the spring semester.

Application requests specifying only a particular residence or type of housing cannot be accommodated, nor can roommate/suitemate preferences, based upon race, ethnicity, religion, religious practices, sexual orientation, dietary preferences, socioeconomic status, physical characteristics or national origin.

Students with documented disabilities who may need some form of disability-related specific housing consideration (accessible housing, access to a private bath or kitchen, single room assignment, strobe alarm, etc.) must complete and submit a request to the Office of Student Disability Services. Housing will make disability-related housing
assignments only after a recommendation from the Office of Student Disability Services. Students who may have received accommodations in the past must re-apply each year to be reconsidered. Previous accommodations are not automatically extended without submitting an updated request for the upcoming academic year.

C. Housing Period

The housing period begins at the time the student takes occupancy of the assigned space which must be no later than 5 p.m. on the first day of classes for each semester. The housing period ends 24 hours after the time a student ceases to be eligible for residence or within 24 hours after the student’s last final examination, but no later than the official posted closing dates noted on the Housing web page and contained within the Housing contract.

Temporary housing, including early arrivals and extended stays, is approved on a limited basis and will result in an additional charge to a student’s account to extend the contracted housing period. Students must be in residence for both the fall and spring semesters in order to be approved for temporary housing.

The following residence halls close during thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks: Bates House, Capstone, Columbia Hall, Honors Residence, McByde, McClintock, Patterson Hall, Preston Residential College, Sims, South Tower, The Roost and Wade Hampton.

D. Room Occupancy

After entering students are officially admitted to the University, have signed residence hall contracts and paid the required application and advance room fees, they are assigned a room as space permits. Assignment is determined by the date of admission application to the institution, within the priority groups (learning communities, Common Courses, etc.). Whenever possible, written requests for a specific hall and roommate(s) will be honored, but the University reserves the right to make whatever room assignments are considered in the best interest of the institution and student body. Students may not move into any room other than the one assigned.

If a resident fails to occupy his or her assigned space on or before the first day of classes, the assignment may be canceled if proper notice of late arrival is not given to the Housing Assignments Office. However, a resident who enrolls, but fails to occupy his or her assigned space, will be required to pay full rental fees. Residents who withdraw from the University at the end of or during the fall semester or spring semester must officially check out with the Housing Assignments Office. Residents may request and pay extra for a single room if space is available. This includes rooms designed for double occupancy.

At all times, only the assigned student shall occupy the assigned space. Under no circumstances may a student swap assignments or keys with another student, sublet their room or provide regular housing to any other person(s).
If for any reason a student ceases to be eligible for housing, they must vacate their room within 48 hours.

Housing reserves the right to assign any vacant space, (including partially occupied multiple rooms and/or single rooms within suites), at any time, and is not obligated to inform roommates or suitemates of changes. Any student with a vacancy in their room should keep the space open and ready for assignment at any point.

E. Room Changes

Any student with roommate concerns will first participate in a roommate discussion/negotiation during which time the roommate contract will be evaluated and adjusted as needed. Vacant spaces within rooms will be assigned to students needing room changes, using a student’s housing application to help match new roommates.

Room changes may be made as often as requested during scheduled room change periods provided space is available. Students may request a room change in the fall (mid-September), in December (for the spring semester), or in the spring (late January). Upperclass students accepted by a learning community may not request a room change over the summer after the returning student room selection process.

Room changes at any other point in the academic year are rarely granted and require that a student has demonstrated an attempt to mediate any roommate/suitemate conflicts. Any room changes that are not approved by the Housing Assignments Office and Residence Life are a violation of policy and the responsible student(s) will be required to return to their previous room and will be subject to conduct sanctions and an illegal room change charge of $75.

Only in unusual circumstances will requests received outside of the scheduled period be approved by the Director of Administration or designee.

F. Consolidation Policy

Housing may initiate and implement a consolidation program in order to: (1) better meet the demand for students requesting to room together; (2) better meet the demand for private rooms; and (3) support the private room policy regarding payment. The consolidation process is applied to unoccupied spaces on a floor or within the building. As such, students are not required to move to another floor or building to accomplish consolidation, but may choose to do so if it would meet their needs. Students in half-vacant rooms will be encouraged to voluntarily consolidate with another resident prior to the implementation of consolidation. Specifically:

1. Students will be notified of the need to have a roommate at the beginning of each semester.
2. Students without roommates can:
   a. Pay the private room rate if it is available in their hall at that time and for
      the remainder of the academic year.
   b. Voluntarily consolidate with another student in a half-vacant room.

3. By the established date, students still in a half-vacant, non-private room will be
   included in the consolidation drawing. All affected students will be invited to the
   drawing.

4. Each floor with half-vacant rooms will hold its own random drawing to determine
   which students will be required to move to one of the other half-vacant rooms on
   their floor.

5. Students will be notified, in writing, of the outcome of the drawing the following
   day. Students drawn to move will have until the following Monday at 8:00 a.m. to
   complete the room change.

6. Failure to comply with consolidation outcomes may result in additional room fees
   and/or disciplinary actions.

G. Illegal occupancy: If a new or non-resident student occupies a room without the consent
   of Housing, the student will be charged $100 plus pro-rated rent. The student may also be
   required to vacate and is subject to disciplinary action. Unregistered non-student
   occupants are subject to arrest.

H. Break Housing: During break housing, which includes thanksgiving, winter and spring
   breaks, most residence halls are closed. Designated halls will remain open and some
   break housing may be available. Due to scheduling pressure, renovations may be going
   on in the halls kept open for break housing. Prior to each break period, specific
   information regarding the availability of break housing and special regulations will be
   distributed.

III. Related Policies

   See also:
   University Policy STAF 6.26 Student Code of Conduct
IV. Reason for Revision

Policy organization, content, and accuracy was reviewed and the policy procedures were revised to reflect current practices.