

University Guest House Annual Report Fiscal Year 2024



We support student well-being and success by creating loyalty to the university, recruiting new studies, supporting university programs, provide a safe and supportive working environment for students, provide real world training and experiences, and provide excellent customer service to guest and visitors

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Executive Summary

The Guest House and Conferences provides lodging and meeting venues for the University of Utah faculty, staff, partners, guests, and visitors. In doing so we attempt to create loyalty to the university, recruit new students via on campus visits and summer conferences, increase exposure to the University, support university programs, provide a supportive working environment for students and provide excellent customer service.

In FY24 we continue to partner with the campus community to support events, programs, and housing. 176 of our 206 rooms were utilized by Housing and Residential Education to house students for Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters. We are now refurbishing the rooms and commons spaces and will scale our reopening for campus visitors and conferences from September 2024 – January 2025.

We are a safe space on campus. The Guest House provides services to all guests, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, gender, race, religion, age, or sexual orientation. We do not discriminate against any groups and welcome all who come to visit the University, the hospitals and other campus entities. We provide safe accommodations to students at risk.

We continue to rank #1 on Trip Advisor for Salt Lake City. We have had this designation for over 10 years.

Our business mix is primarily hospital patients and visitors and campus departments. Student parents and hosted public events round out our occupancy.

Students are a big focus of employment. We provide a flexible on campus location for students to interact with visitors from throughout the world and become intimately involved in many of the programs held on the University campus. We provide a safe environment, which is convenient and close to classes. We immerse them in the University of Utah culture in hopes to make their education experience richer and more immersive.

Major Accomplishments

In the Fall of 2022, the University Guest House turned over 176 of its 206 rooms to Housing and Residential Education to accommodate the increased demand for student housing. The remaining 30 rooms remained available for hospital guests and campus visitors. In order to support these rooms, we isolated the Conference Level to be used solely for hotel guests. We relocated the front desk, remodeled our business center into a breakfast serving area, and created a new lobby. The conference entrance became the new guest entrance, and we continue to maintain the same services and amenities. We continue to use the meeting rooms on the conference level for meetings and campus programs.

As predicted both guest room and meeting room occupancy has been strong. The 30 suites available for guest are frequently sold out and meeting space usage continues to grow. This has helped us surpass revenue predictions in all areas.

Despite losing most of our facilities, we are still able to maintain our #1 ranking on Trip Advisor for Salt Lake City, beating out every other hotel in the city. This is our 10th year of being #1 and our 12th year in the top 2. In 2024 we were, again, awarded the Travelers Choice Award which is awarded to properties ranked in the Top 10 of Trip Advisor

Conference and Event Management has seen a significant increase in demand. For FY 24 we coordinated 11 full-service conferences on and off campus with stronger demand for FY25, currently, we have 10 contracted and 3 in negotiation.

Summer Housing once again saw an unprecedented demand for summer programs with total hosted students at 13,500. These are high school age students visiting our campus, some for the first time. Research data shows this plays an important role when students are choosing which school to attend after high school graduation.

We have seen significant revenue increases from FY2023 in almost every area. The University Guest House has seen a 23% increase in room revenue and a 116% increase in meeting room revenue. Summer housing has seen a 43% increase over FY22 which was our largest revenue year up to that point.

Major Challenges

The Guest House faces two immediate challenges: Refurbishing the physical facility and rebuilding occupancy and usage demand. Having only 30 rooms available for the past two years, we now have the challenge of reeducating the campus and surrounding community that the Guest House and Conference Center is now open to the public for campus visits, meetings and events. We must first refurbish both the guest rooms and the common areas. Having full time residents for over two years has put significant stress on the facilities. This project will take approximate 6 – 8 months to complete. We will phase room openings beginning September and hope to have all rooms back online by February. Building occupancy will not happen overnight and will take a concerted effort from all staff. People are creatures of habit. They have been going other places for two years. We now have to entice them back to campus. We know the demand is there, and with our competitive rates and excellent service we are confident we will be successful in the end.

Staffing continues to be a challenge. We have been slow to fill open positions in a timely manner. We are operating on a very small staff. Multiple recruiting pathways provide little to no applicants. We believe we are competitive in the marketplace. We understand that this is not unique to the Guest House or the University. We continue to work on this issue and hope that as time passes this will begin to correct itself.

Our aging facility is another challenge. The Guest House is 25 years old this October. It was not built to the same standards as other campus buildings and has a shorter shelf life. Many of our systems are showing their age and beginning to fail. We are continually working to repair and upgrade them. Having full time residents in the building puts added stress on all systems. The most threatening system is our attic fire suppression, which has had consistent pipe failure. We are using stop gap measures currently as we work with facilities to get a contractor who can replace the entire system. This process is slow going.

Strategic initiatives

Now that we have our entire facility back, we focus on maintaining full occupancy, growing summer housing, and filling our meeting space. We will focus on outreach and marketing to our large client base, reminding them that we are here on campus and fully open again.

We continue to promote student success through the following ongoing initiatives.

GUEST HOUSE

The Guest House offers on campus employment opportunities. Flexible hours to work around school schedule. We also provide 24/7 support for any issues at work or in their personal lives.

The Guest House is a Living laboratory for students in hospitality, tourism management, and business. We provide internships and mentoring programs in PRT, marketing, accounting, conference operations and hotel management.

We hire students in each area of our department – front desk, housekeeping, maintenance, conference services and summer conferencing. Nearly half of our staff are students. Because we are on campus it is convenient for students to work at the University Guest House & Conference Center which makes for a positive student experience. We support their education and provide flexible scheduling and quiet places for them to take care of schoolwork. We follow up to make sure our students are successful in their studies and offer solutions to challenges they may have.

Our diverse work environment and daily challenges give students the opportunities they need to gain confidence with communication skills by interacting with campus departments, international conference attendees and a wide range of hospital guests. We empower our students to make decisions, solve problems, learn from their success and mistakes.

Students are exposed to a professional setting. They also have the opportunity to meet a diverse group of people, both co-workers as well as guests. This includes different cultures, genders, and ages. They also meet and assist people who are

staying here and having hospital procedures/treatments. They often help with large conferences and meetings that focus on training, education and research and interact with professors and researchers from all over the world.

Students also become ambassadors to new and prospective students and their parents. The Guest House is often the first point of contact for people visiting for the first time. This sets the expectation for prospective students and their parents and gives insight to into the culture of campus.

The Guest House gives students the opportunities they need to gain confidence with communication skills by interacting with campus departments, international conference attendees and a wide range of hospital guests. They learn empathy and acceptance along with critical thinking skills. They learn the ins and out of the University system which not only helps them during their time at the U but helps to prepare students for life after college.

The Guest House also offers students a place where they can feel safe as well as learn life & job skills. We have had students who have worked for our department that have stayed for years until graduation. Some stay after graduation and continue to build their skills while others take what they have learned and move on. Most of our students are grateful for the experience and the many different people they have met.

SUMMER HOUSING AND CONFERENCES

We employ an average of 24 students every summer with a 50% return rate of staff

- Offer housing, meal plan, and an hourly wage.
- Give them a platform to be heard, inviting recommendations and a supportive, safe environment.
- Mentoring the students doesn't end when their employment does. Many of them continue to reach out during and after their undergraduate experience at the U.
- When a student mentions they want to go in the conference field, as an organization we invest in assisting them in that journey. We have been lucky to hire many students once they have completed their degree.

- We invite and welcome letters of recommendation for graduate school and employment, as well as assisting students with building their resume.
- Residency is a key component of recruitment.
- Training approach teaching them professional development in the business realm.
 - Email etiquette
 - Phone etiquette
 - Meeting etiquette
 - Business model from beginning to end.
 - Provide them with Emergency Training and On-call training.
- We have offered internships to the School of Business, PRT, and Commuter Services
- Build our program based on the student experience by allowing them to give feedback and offer suggestions to make the experience better for future student employees and future Summer Conference guests.
- The summer student staff's hard work and enthusiasm has helped the University of Utah Summer Conferences flourish.
 - Our students welcomed and hosted over 10,000 potential U of U students.
 - Our student staff are trained Ambassadors for the U
- Quite often we house various University students from around the world and other campuses to showcase who we are at the U.
- Several departments bring University students to stay on campus each summer. Their students enjoy interacting with our student staff and are pleased with their stay.

RECRUITING

We provide an on-campus housing and conference experience for over 12,000 potential students per summer. This is an incredible recruiting tool. Potential students get a glimpse of the college experience here at the U. Programs last 5 days to several months. These students walk away with a positive outlook on the University of Utah, and it plants the seed in their mind about attending the U in the future.