

To: Residence Life & Housing, Dean of Students Office, President's Office
SUBJECT: **STUDENT CONCERNS FOR WINTER BREAK**

Hello all,

This morning, we write to you to express the great concern about Clark University's response to meeting urgent student needs during this unprecedented semester. As you may all know, many students have expressed financial difficulties this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the current global economic recession.

Recently, the University released an intercession plan, asking students to move to the Main Street houses and pay a fee of \$20 a day. The students staying here during the wintertime have no alternative. Most of the students staying for the break are international students, students from low-income backgrounds and/or have unique health and safety predicaments.

As you may be aware, Clark is home to marginalized students of color, self-supporting students, low-income students, international students, and students with diverse abilities. Implementing the plan Clark has released, will disproportionately impact these students. Adding financial barriers to staying on campus during the break without proper support, sufficient notice, and Clark's resources will hurt students more than assist them. While we understand concerns about capacity regarding a potentially high amount of students staying over break, and thus the decision to have a per day fee, we believe it would be in the best interest of the University to avoid displacing students and creating a houselessness issue during this already difficult time.

If the only option available for the University is to overcharge students staying, we request the following initiatives to preserve the well being of Clark students:

1. **Expand and publicize the** grace period policy approved by RLH in 2019 to 5 days which allows students who live 500+ miles away to stay for additional days without any fees.
2. **Subsidize** stipends to ALL RAs remaining on campus to purchase food and groceries since the dining hall will be closed.
3. **Provide** safe and affordable housing options (whether on-campus or off-campus) for students who cannot leave, do not have the physical or financial ability to return home, or may not have a safe home environment.

- a. Specifically low-income and international students applications
 - i. **Waiving** fees related to staying on campus for all low-income students and other folx experiencing financial difficulties during these times through the University Emergency Fund, Federal Cares Act
 - b. Ensuring all students who are remaining on campus are **allotted a grace period** (5 days) to move in as a staggering method to avoid close move-in interactions/close contact with others during move-in.
 - c. **Move** all students to Blackstone as it is the most updated and renovated dorm with the most amenities (i.e. full kitchen and common spaces).
4. **Partner** with CUSC to fund and sustain the food pantry for students to use during the intercession period.
 5. **Elaborate** on why the University decided to **enact a daily fee** rather than a large sum charge for the break
 - a. This year, the cost of the standard meal plan has **increased** by \$120 to \$4,000, and the charge for a standard (double) room changed to \$5,800, an **increase** of \$200 (see www.clarku.edu/tuition-2020-2021). Yet, there were no increases to RA compensation, improvements in Hall facilities and the Residence Life and Housing Department maintains a vacancy in its Director position.
 - b. Students deserve transparency regarding the use of and management of funds allocated to Residence Life and Housing.
 6. Ensure **escort** continues to operate at least three times a week to assist students in buying necessities as well as maintaining student employment.

We want to reiterate that we are entirely determined to help students, staff, and faculty at all costs. We kindly ask that you partner with us to provide the most equitable outcomes possible. We will not allow profit to drive your actions.

We firmly believe that including student voices in decision-making produces the best outcomes. We ask for transparency, partnership, and responsibility.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Thank you,

The Undergraduate Student Council 110th session