

## October 2014 Statement and Update on Delays to Lakeside Graduate Housing

### Introduction

The Lakeside graduate housing complex was announced in spring 2012 and originally scheduled to open in summer 2014. The repeated delays to this facility have been disappointing, unpredictable, and disruptive to Princeton's graduate student community. Hundreds of Princeton's graduate students are now living in temporary assignments at the slated-for-demolition Butler and Stanworth sites, still waiting for concrete unit assignments, details about the transition process, and definite move-in dates. These students:

- Have gone to extraordinary lengths to accommodate the University's housing process with a near-absence of reliable information.
- Had no choice but to make important housing and financial decisions based on University announcements that ultimately proved inaccurate.
- Have borne significant and material hardship as a result of substantial delays and insufficient University communication.
- **Deserve to be treated fairly and compensated appropriately.**

The Graduate Student Government has conducted a thorough survey of students affected by the Lakeside delays and recommends the following remedies to the University administration. A list of these remedies has been supplied to University administrators who have, in turn, provided responses to many of the items raised. We will continue to advocate for these positions and take all the steps we can to ensure that all commitments are met.

In this document GSG policy recommendations are designated by an arrow (→), University responses are designated by a star (★), and other list items are designated by a bullet (•).

### Maintenance of the Butler and Stanworth Complexes

Nearly all graduate students who accepted Lakeside housing draw assignments have been relocated to the Butler and Stanworth complexes by necessity and not by choice. Many of these students have raised concerns about the deteriorating quality of their units, the poor repair of shared laundry facilities, and the excessive amount of time taken to fulfill maintenance requests. We strongly urge the University to address these concerns by publicly committing to the maintenance of the Butler and Stanworth sites and the timely fulfillment of work orders requested by their residents.

- ★ **University response:** The University has committed to fully maintaining the Butler and Stanworth complexes and to the timely fulfillment of work orders until these complexes are fully vacated.

### Appropriate Communication Regarding the Lakeside Project

Princeton's graduate students and graduate student organizations have been frustrated and materially disadvantaged by the University's failure to provide information about the Lakeside project in a timely and detailed fashion. For example, no updates about Lakeside were sent to affected graduate students between April 17, 2014 and September 18, 2014 - a period of 5 months, ending 4 weeks before the complex was projected to open.

It is unreasonable to expect Princeton's graduate students and graduate student organizations to continue operating without information about the Lakeside transition. We strongly urge the University to adopt the timelines below and to furnish the following information in writing to students affected by the Lakeside delays.

- *By 19 October 2014 (as promised in the 18 September Lakeside update):* Unit assignments to all students who accepted a Lakeside draw.
- *By 19 October 2014:* Specific details about the facilities Lakeside will offer when complete, including:
  - Details about the common space.
    - Layout, dimensions, and floor plans of common spaces
    - Information about how the common spaces will be floored
    - Information about utilities available in the common spaces, specifically storage closets and electrical outlets
  - Details about the Lakeside gym.
    - Layout and dimensions of the room
    - Included exercise equipment
- *By 19 October 2014, and monthly thereafter (as promised in the 18 September Lakeside Update):* Updates on the progress of the Lakeside complex. We believe it is important that these updates include, at minimum:
  - An updated projection for building-specific phased occupancy dates.
  - An updated projection for the completion of the complex and all amenities.
  - Details regarding the construction status of each Lakeside building.
- *At least one month before the first 4-week move window opens:* Details about the condition of Lakeside when students are to first move in, including:
  - The nature and degree of on-site construction noise.
  - Whether or not residents will experience disruptions to water, electricity, data, or other utilities as a result of ongoing construction at the Lakeside site.
  - The availability of amenities. Particularly, the status of:
    - The Lakeside community room and common spaces
    - The Lakeside gym
    - The parking structure
    - University bus service to Lakeside

★ **University response:** The University has committed to providing assignment information by October 19th. This commitment includes adopting the Lakeside update timeline proposed in this section and providing, by the dates specified in this section, as much of the additional information requested as is available in writing to students affected by the Lakeside delays

### **Reasonable Administration of the Transition Process**

Moving in the middle of the academic year poses significant difficulty for graduate students. Lakeside's original summer move-in window would have avoided many of these conflicts. The University should afford transitioning graduate students flexibility in the moving process to limit the extent to which their academic work is disrupted. We strongly urge the University to adopt the following transition policies.

- Give students a 4-week window within which they can move to Lakeside with full moving assistance.
  - Give students a minimum notice of 4 weeks prior to the beginning of their 4-week move window.
  - Allow students to take a walkthrough of their Lakeside apartment, or a comparable Lakeside unit, as soon as they are alerted to the dates of their 4-week move window.
  - Ensure additional flexibility to students who have important academic obligations that fall within or near their move window.
  - Ensure additional flexibility to students whose move windows fall within or near the winter holidays, academic breaks, or other periods of significant travel.
- ★ **University response:** The University has committed to providing 4-week move windows, and to providing 4 weeks of notice prior to the beginning of any 4-week move window. In addition, the University has committed to providing flexibility with the 4-week move windows if there are academic obligations or compelling other reasons that would pose a hardship for a student, and to handle review of such cases via a joint student/administrator committee. The University has promised to investigate the matter of providing Lakeside walkthroughs in more detail, and to provide a response to this request when it has more information.

### **Appropriate Compensation for Expenses Incurred by the Lakeside Delays**

In its April 17, 2014 announcement - when Lakeside was projected to open in mid-October 2014 - the University offered affected graduate students moving assistance and financial compensation reasonable for a two-month delay. Since this announcement, the situation has developed unfavorably in multiple respects:

- Lakeside delays have worsened since the April announcement, yet the University has abridged the compensation offered to affected graduate students by attaching significant conditions to this compensation.
- Students relocated to the Butler complex will soon incur **significant and unexpected** winter utility bills as a consequence of:
  - The inefficient heating of their units; and
  - The reasonable expectation, as informed by updates from Housing & Real Estate Services, that affected students would be moving to Lakeside before the advent of cold weather
- For some affected students, the rent charged for temporary units exceeds the rent that would have been charged at Lakeside, despite inferior location and unit quality.

- Many affected students have had no choice but to rent storage units, purchase appliances they would not have needed at Lakeside, and incur other additional expenses as a result of the Lakeside delays and insufficient University communication.

Compensation offered by the University should reflect the hardships graduate students have had to assume, and should scale proportionally with the magnitude of delays. Two-months' rent forgiveness and Lakeside-bound moving assistance, even in the absence of the conditions the University has attached, are no longer sufficient compensation for the expenses and hardships the continued Lakeside delays have imposed.

With this in mind, we strongly urge the University to adopt the following policies regarding compensation of graduate students.

- Offer the two-months' rent forgiveness promised in the April 18, 2014 announcement to all graduate students affected by the Lakeside delays, regardless of housing outcome.
  - In cases where an affected student's temporary assignment rent exceeds that of the Lakeside unit s/he was promised - effective immediately - pro-rate the temporary assignment's rent so that it does not exceed promised Lakeside assignment rent.
  - Establish a Lakeside Hardship Fund and controlling committee, to include graduate students, charged with accepting, reviewing, and granting the compensation claims of affected students who have incurred additional expenses.
  - Provide moving assistance to all affected students moving to Lakeside regardless of where they have been temporarily housed.
- ★ **University response:** The University has advised the GSG Executive Committee that the provision of the remedies requested in this section requires further review and approval through the University's normal budget allocation process. The University is in support of a hardship review process carried out by a joint student/administrator committee. The University has promised to investigate the feasibility of these provisions further and to provide a definitive response when one is available. Please note: the University has not had the opportunity to respond to the last recommendation in this section (moving assistance) due to its recent addition to the document.

### **Conclusion**

The difficulties we have detailed and the policy recommendations we have provided reflect the challenges faced and wishes expressed by Princeton's graduate students. The University responses we have included directly reflect GSG Executive Committee correspondence with representatives from Housing & Real Estate Services and the Graduate School. We look forward to a productive dialogue with the University's administration toward resolution of the challenges facing those affected by the Lakeside delays and hope for the speedy and uneventful completion of the Lakeside complex.

*Approved by the Graduate Student Government Assembly – October 8th, 2014*