

## CASE STUDY University of Alaska Southeast



**UNIVERSITY of ALASKA SOUTHEAST**



The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) is a rural 4-year, public university that serves over 1,000 undergraduate students annually, 200 of whom live on campus. UAS has three rural campuses situated on indigenous lands in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka that offer students unique experiential learning opportunities in the Tongass National Forest, intertidal marine environments, and on nearby icefields. As such they place a significant emphasis on creating a tight-knit community that embraces diversity and value place.

We look at the data closely and break down data points from every single question. We use these results to understand how we're doing and make thoughtful improvements each year."

*Nathan Bodensadt, Director of Resident Life*

### GOALS

UAS's strategic plan emphasizes leading with innovation as well as cooperative partnerships that enhance their effectiveness. The Department of Student Housing contributes to this strategic plan through their efforts to connect students to a larger community in order to support their learning and academic success. These contributions require intentional and sustained efforts informed by the collection of relevant data.

### SOLUTION

To accomplish their institutional and departmental goals, UAS's Department of Student Housing uses the ACUHO-I / Benchworks Resident Assessment each spring to:

- ◆ Better understand the experiences and learning of on-campus residents
- ◆ Inform efforts to make continuous improvements and build a strong sense of community
- ◆ Highlight the impact of previous changes



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## KEY INITIATIVES & INSIGHTS

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

UAS focuses heavily on longitudinal trends in their Resident Assessment data, determining what scores have increased or decreased over time, and using those insights to prioritize efforts. This provides team focus and clarity on what really matters to residents.

### STAFF TRAINING

UAS uses the results to inform and prioritize topics covered in training for both professional and student staff. This allows the institution to remain agile and flexible to the changing needs of their residents. Returning student staff also present at summer training to increase engagement, mentor peers, and provide advanced learning opportunities.

### PARTNERSHIPS

UAS Student Housing shares key insights from the survey with partners across campus. This approach models institutional values to pursue excellence, create accessibility to programs and services, and be responsible stewards in the use of resources to enhance effectiveness with students best interest in mind.

### EMPOWERING RESIDENTS

Department staff share high-level survey results with residents to illustrate how their perspectives are used to make meaningful changes. This outreach builds trust, creates an environment where continuous conversations can occur, and empowers residents to further share their thoughts.

### ROOMMATE AGREEMENTS

UAS noticed in both survey results and interactions with residents that it was difficult for roommates to start tough conversations. As a result, UAS now requires roommate agreements. This change has allowed students to address potential issues before they develop and remove discomfort previously felt from having to complete one after a disagreement occurred.

### BUILDING COMMUNITY

With a smaller on-campus population, staff in Student Housing are able to go the extra mile to recognize individual milestones (from academic achievements to birthdays), have more honest, intentional conversations, and focus on personal connections that feel less transactional to students.