Jan 28th: 5th Annual Off-Campus Housing Fair

The 5th Annual Off-Campus Housing Fair will take place on Tuesday, January 28th from 4:00-6:00 PM in the Mary Graydon Center (MGC).

American University undergraduate and graduate students seeking housing options for off-campus living will have the opportunity to interact with property managers, landlords, community services providers and on-campus partners.

Housing & Dining Programs staff members will also be available to help answer questions regarding the room selection process for Fall 2014. Additionally, a representative from AU Dining will be on site to answer questions and provide information regarding meal plans and dining options for our commuter students.

Prizes and refreshments will be provided for all participants. More information about the Off-Campus Housing Fair can be found at: http://www.american.edu/ocl/housing/

Off-Campus Housing Tips
Contributed by Christina Medico, Off-Campus & Guest Housing Coordinator

The Search:

The AU Off-Campus Housing Posting Site is a great place to find different housing options, roommates, and even furniture: http://www.american.edu/ocl/Off-Campus-Housing-Postings.cfm

Realtor.com is a great resource with listings for rooms, apartments and houses.

Craigslist is great for finding furniture and housing, but AU recommends that you use your best judgment when using Craigslist and sites like it.

Sometimes the best search tool is word of mouth. Maybe your friend doesn’t need a roommate, but they might know someone else who does. It never hurts to ask.

The Visit:

Make sure to meet with the property manager and all of your potential roommates.

Review the property thoroughly, and check important components including: water pressure, plumbing, appliances, closet space, light fixtures, cupboards, doors, windows and the surrounding neighborhood.

Ask questions up front, including:
- When is rent due? Is there a grace period?
- What, if any, utilities are included?
- How can I report problems with another resident? How do you handle such issues?

Know your rights as a tenant and be aware that leases are legally binding documents. Reading and understanding your lease is the best way to protect yourself.
A Message from the Associate Dean of Students

Contributed by Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students

It’s been a tough start to the spring semester as far as our winter weather is concerned! No need to worry however, warm weather and thoughts of spring break are not far away! Until then however, we may see more snow days in the District, so it seems to be a good time to remind everyone of the commitment the university has made to be good neighbors in the local community.

We count on you to demonstrate the maturity and consideration for others that form the foundation of satisfying off campus living. At a minimum, we want you to be aware of the expectations American University has for your conduct. Specific ordinances related to parking, snow removal, and other community issues are often in effect during winter storms so please:

• Know, understand and abide by local ordinances and laws (e.g. Which side of the street can you park on in the event of a snow storm? How soon does your sidewalk need to be shoveled? Does the trash pick-up schedule change?)
• Know, understand and abide by the terms of your lease (e.g. What does your landlord expect with regard to snow removal, maintenance of heating units, and protection against frozen pipes?)
• Monitor and maintain the condition of your property;
• If hosting friends when a snow day occurs, be sure to manage the behavior of your guests and;
• When you choose to host friends at your residence, do so in a responsible, considerate and lawful manner.

Neighbor reports of disturbance or reports from local law enforcement will result in a meeting with staff from the Office of the Dean of Students to discuss the incidents, and may result in your referral to the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution.

The “Disorderly Conduct Amendment Act of 2010” became effective in Washington D.C. on February 1, 2011. While it is important for you to become familiar with all the provisions of this act, one provision warrants your full attention:

It is unlawful for a person to make an unreasonably loud noise between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. that is likely to annoy or disturb one or more other persons in their residences. [Sec. 211. Disorderly conduct. (d)]

A person who violates this or any of the other provisions of this section will be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, will be fined up to $500, imprisoned up to 90 days, or both.

There are multiple tips and resources for off campus students on the Off Campus Housing Website (http://www.american.edu/ocl/housing/off-campus-resources.cfm.) Please take time to review this site and see what can be helpful to you. If you would like assistance in communicating with your neighbors, or if you want to discuss ways to manage your off-campus residence effectively, please call the Office of the Dean of Students at (202)885-3300 and schedule an appointment.

Best of luck for a successful spring semester!

Commuter Student Lounge

Contributed by Christina Medico, Off-Campus & Guest Housing Coordinator

Last Spring the Commuter Lounge opened as a place for off-campus students to store their belongings during the day, study, and socialize. The Lounge – located just inside the East Quad Building’s front entrance - offers commuter and transfer students 72 digital day lockers, charging stations for computers and phones, and plenty of comfortable seating.

Commuter students also can enjoy a special place reserved for them in Bender Library. Located in the sublevel of the library next to the Mud Box is the Commuter Corner, which provides lockers and comfortable seating.

The Commuter Lounge and its lockers are open to students Monday through Friday (6am to 11pm), Saturdays (8am to 8pm), and Sundays (8am to 8:30pm).

The Commuter Corner will follow library hours.
How to Report Suspected Housing Violations
Contributed by Christina Medico, Off-Campus & Guest Housing Coordinator

If you feel your apartment or building does not comply with the standards as outlined by the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), you should take the following steps to identify necessary repairs:

1. Write out a list of code violations using the Housing Code Standards or the more detailed regulations in Title 14 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations to determine what must be repaired. Make one list for all of the violations for your apartment. Preserve physical evidence of violations to show to the D.C. housing inspector. Try to bring a witness with you for complaints.

2. All requests for repairs should be sent in writing to the landlord, resident manager, or rental office asking them to make the repairs. Keep a copy of every letter or note you write and make a list of all calls, letters, and meetings along with the date and time they occurred. When calling the landlord, make certain you obtain the name of the person who takes your complaint. Obtain a receipt from the landlord for delivery of the letters if possible.

3. If you receive no response to your complaint or the repairs are not made, invite the landlord or resident manager to meet with you.

4. If management still does not respond, you should request a housing inspection by calling or writing the Housing Inspection Section of the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, 1100 4th Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20024 or by calling (202) 442-9557. You can also request an inspection via email at dcra.housingcomplaints@dc.gov. Please include name, phone number, and summary of issues.

An inspection will usually be scheduled within a week but an inspector can respond sooner in emergencies. Remember to keep a copy of every letter or note and make a list of all calls along with date and time they occurred.

Does your Landlord have the License to Rent?
Contributed by Andrew Huff, Director of Community Relations

Renting a house or apartment in the District of Columbia? If so, your landlord is required by law to possess a Basic Business License (BBL). Having a BBL ensures that the appropriate local government agencies have inspected the premises for your safety. Whether you are renting a single-family home, townhouse, duplex, condominium unit, or individual room, your landlord is required to obtain a BBL. Failure to do so may result in a fine.

Not sure if your landlord has a BBL? Simply go to http://pivs.dcra.dc.gov/PIVS/Search.aspx and enter the property address. Next, click on “BBL” in the left hand column and you will see whether or not your landlord has a valid BBL. If they do not, they can be reported to the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) by calling 202-442-4400 or emailing dcra@dc.gov.

If you need additional assistance, please contact Housing and Dining Programs at 202-885-3370.
Students Parking With Out-Of-State Vehicles
Rules affect students living in Spring Valley, New Mexico/Cathedral and Wesley Heights

Contributed by Linda Argo, Assistant Vice President External Relations and Strategic Initiatives

Last year, the DC Council passed the “Residential Parking Protection Act of 2012” in response to area residents’ complaints about the increasing difficulty in finding on-street parking in the neighborhoods surrounding AU. The legislation disqualifies full-time students who reside temporarily in the District from obtaining Reciprocity Permits that allow them to park their out-of-state-registered vehicles in the neighborhood. Students who reside in the neighborhood and wish to park in the restricted areas for more than two hours will be required to register their vehicles in the District, and apply for a Residential Parking Permit (RPP).

Students who live and park in Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANC) districts 3D01, 3D02, 3D07, 3D08, and 3D10 — generally parts of Spring Valley, New Mexico/Cathedral, and Wesley Heights — will be affected by the legislation. To locate your ANC 3D district, click the link below.

Additional Resources:
Locate your ANC 3D district:  http://citizenatlas.dc.gov/atlasapps/reportshometab.aspx
New DC Vehicle Registration information:  http://dmv.dc.gov/service/new-vehicle-registration
Vehicle Registration Fees:  http://dmv.dc.gov/node/155502
Residential Parking Permit Application information:  http://dmv.dc.gov/service/obtain-residential-parking-permit-rpp
AU’s Parking and Traffic Services website:  http://www.american.edu/finance/publicsafety/parking/index.cfm

Parking On-Campus

Contributed by Christina Medico, Off-Campus & Guest Housing Coordinator

In accordance with the University’s “Good Neighbor Policy”, all members of the University community (including students, faculty, staff, visitors and guests) are required to do one of the following while attending class, working, or visiting AU-owned property:

A. Park on campus and obtain a parking permit;
B. Purchase hourly/daily parking using the Pay-As-You-Go machines;
C. Use public transportation.

Compliance with the Good Neighbor Policy is a condition of enrollment and/or employment at American University.

American University offers two options for paying for parking:

1) Hourly Parking: For short term or irregular parking paid by the hour or day in our Pay-as-you-Go lots.

Payment machines are located in the Nebraska Lot, Katzen Garage, and the SIS Garage. Payment options are VISA, Master Card, Discover, Eaglebucks, and Cash. Pay-as-you-Go is also available by using Verrus pay by phone. Simply call 1-888-450-7275, and follow the prompts.

2) Permit Parking: Students (by Semester and Academic Year) and Faculty/Staff permits are available. If you live in Washington, D.C. you must comply with the new DC Parking requirements before completing the Commuter Student’s permit application. Any D.C. commuter student not complying with the D.C. Parking Requirements will not be issued an AU Parking Permit.

No vehicles parking on American University property are exempt from the parking policy. Faculty/staff parking permit lots and Pay-As-You-Go Lots are enforced Mondays through Fridays from 8:00am until 5:00pm.

If you have any questions about on-campus parking—please contact Public Safety at 202-885-3111.

AU is now a Tobacco & Smoke-Free Campus

After years of campus discussion, American University officially became a tobacco and smoke-free campus on August 15, 2013.

For more information, visit http://www.american.edu/tobaccofree
I plan to study abroad this summer, but my lease goes until August, what should I do?

Remember that your lease is a legal agreement between you and your landlord or leasing agency. Ending a lease early will likely result in financial penalties for you. It is possible that your landlord could also take legal action. Instead of paying rent for the months you won’t be here you could rent out your space as a sublet. Our off-campus housing posting site allows you to post a listing for your room or apartment. Please be mindful that a sublet must still be cleared with your landlord, and there may be language in your lease preventing you from subleasing. It is also a good idea to enter into a contract with your subleaser or even add them to your lease so they are liable to pay.

My landlord has not been very straightforward with me. Where can I learn more about my rights as a tenant?

D.C.’s Office of Tenants Advocacy (ota.dc.gov) is a great place to learn more about your rights as a tenant. If you are interested in learning more information about your rights as a tenant, please visit their website at ota.dc.gov

Clawed, do you have any pointers for furnishing my new place?

Decorating your apartment with new furniture can get pricey pretty quickly. Stores like Target and IKEA offer cheaper alternatives. A great new feature of our Off-Campus Posting Site is that ability to buy and/or sell furniture. The website offers you the option to post or search for furniture, electronics, and other items to furnish your off-campus home. You can access the furniture message board through our Off-Campus Posting Site at http://www.american.edu/ocl/housing/Off-Campus-Housing-Postings.cfm

Got questions for Clawed??? Email him at offcampushousing@american.edu

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A copy of the act is available through this link: www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/

Love using your AU ID for Student Discounts???

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