



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
STUDENTS' UNION

First-Entry Professional Faculties Residence Representation & Accommodations Report

February 2021

Addendum: April 21, 2021

Paul Kaita, Vice-President, Professional Faculties

Winston Chan, Executive Assistant, Research and Administration

University of Toronto Students' Union

12 Hart House Circle, Toronto, ON, M5S 3J9

vpprofessionalfaculties@utsu.ca

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
Application Process	4
Affected Faculties	4
First Year Residence Guarantee	4
Residence Eligibility	5
Residence Proportional Representation	6
Issues at Hand	7
Unclear StarPortal Residence Ranking System	7
Lack of Publicly Accessible Information from Residence Websites	7
Residence Allocation Process Transparency	7
Lack of Professional Faculty Residence Supports	8
Difficulty Meeting Other Professional Faculty Students	8
U of T College System Identity	8
Lack of Available Spaces in the College Residences	8
Residence Survey	9
Notable Quotes	10
Housing Statistics	11
Residence Student Demographic Breakdown by Faculty	11
Faculty Student Demographic Breakdown by Residence	16
Addendum: Residence Preference Statistics	17
Conclusion	18
Recommendations	19
Short Term Recommendations	19
Long Term Recommendations	20



Introduction

The report has been prepared by Paul Kaita, Vice-President Professional Faculties (2020-2021), and Winston Chan, Executive Assistant Research & Administration (2020-2021) and all materials have been conducted between May 2020 - February 2021 during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The necessity for this report sparked from the 2020-2021 VP Professional Faculties notices the challenges living in the college residences for the duration of their entire undergrad. The VP Professional Faculties initiated this process in order to improve the residence life experience for both prospective students and current students residing in residence.

The process began with the “First-Entry Professional Faculties Residence Survey,” collecting responses from the first-entry professional faculty students to hear concerns that current students and alumni have felt regarding the residence life experience at the University of Toronto. The survey asked about their personal experiences of residence life, decisions for selecting their top choice residence, and the significance of living on campus.

From then, we analyzed housing demographics statistics and compared the number of professional faculty students living on campus and their respective residences to develop transparent information about where professional faculty students are traditionally placed.

This report provides an overview of the Residence Life experience for First-Entry Professional Faculty students that are eligible in living on campus. This report is essential in outlining the changing needs of our professional faculty students. Often the identity of First-Entry Professional Faculties are often lost in the sea of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and professional faculty students are not being thought of. The Faculty of Arts and Science, while succeeding in their growth, it places professional faculty students at a disadvantage, especially in terms of the residence experience.

Background

Students in Professional Faculties have approached the UTSU with concerns surrounding the residence allocation process for students in First-Entry Professional Faculties. This concern first arose as a result of the increasing demand to be placed in the college residences as a majority of professional faculty students are placed at Chestnut Residence. With Chestnut Residence being at the literal margins of campus, professional faculty students feel isolated from the physical university community.

There is a lack of transparency in the residence allocation process, lack of information provided to incoming students when applying to the University of Toronto, and lack of direct programming and support for professional faculty students while living in residences. This information is not publicly accessible to students wishing to learn more about the residence systems. Especially the College and Faculty system creating a fragmented campus, it becomes difficult to find correct, accurate information all in one location.

Application Process

Residence Life plays an integral role in campus life and transition into the University of Toronto. Residences on the St. George Campus houses approximately 75% first-year, with 25% upper year students. Students within the Faculty of Arts and Science apply directly to their residence choice upon successful admission into their respective college and either are residents at their college or at Chestnut Residence. For the First-Entry Professional Faculty students, their process occurs when they rank the top choice residence through [StarPortal](#) and receive a residence offer directly from the respective residence office.

Affected Faculties

- First-Entry Faculties: direct-entry from high school programs
 - Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design
 - Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering
 - Faculty of Music
 - Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education

First Year Residence Guarantee

The First-Year Residence Guarantee is implemented to ensure that first-year students receive the opportunity to live in residence.

“Residence is guaranteed for all new full-time students entering their first year of university in an undergraduate program for the first time, provided that they have



indicated their interest in residence by completing the StarRez Portal application by March 31, and receive and accept an offer of admission by June 1."

If you missed the March 31 deadline, you can still apply to be on the waitlist.

Students must respond to all deadlines and meet all deposit requirements in order to maintain their eligibility."

Residence Eligibility

According to the [University of Toronto Student Life Division](#), the four first-entry professional faculties are eligible to live at:

- Chestnut Residence
- New College
- St. Michael's College
- Loretto College (affiliated residence of St. Michael's College)
- Trinity College
- University College
- Victoria College
- Innis College (available to only students in the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering and the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design.²
- Student Family Housing - only qualifying students are permitted.³

¹<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/1st-year-residence-guarantee/#:~:text=Residence%20is%20guaranteed%20for%20all,of%20admission%20by%20June%201.>

²<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/residence-application-for-1st-year-professional-faculty-students/>

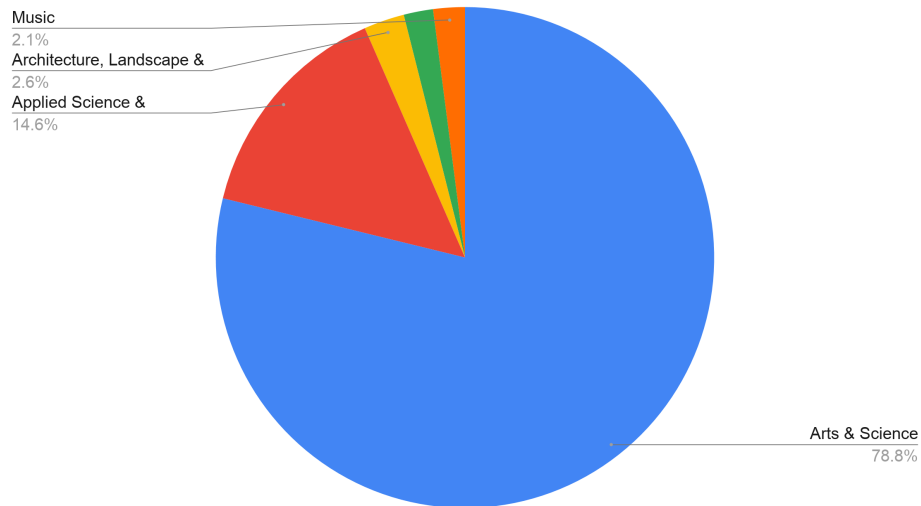
³ <https://studentfamilyhousing.utoronto.ca/admissions/eligibility/>



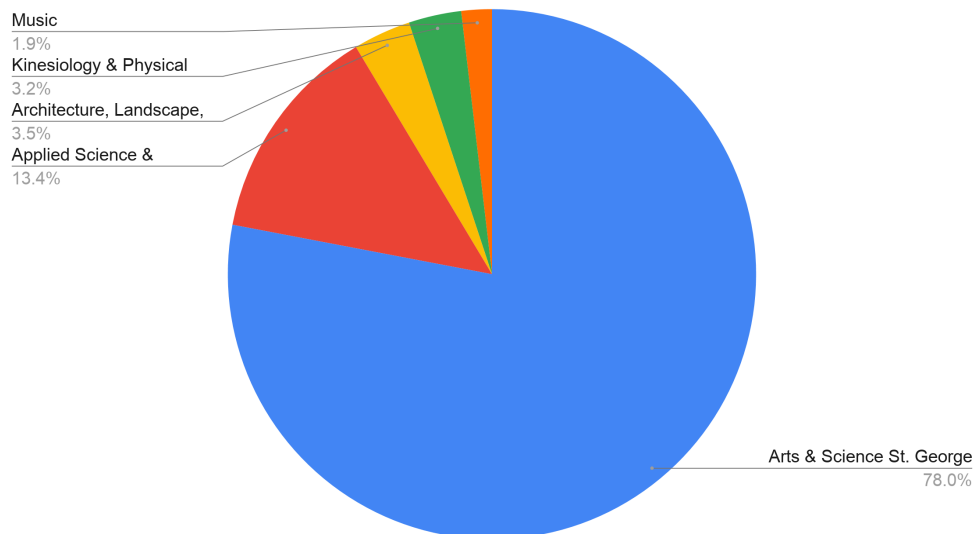
Residence Proportional Representation

Undergraduate students living in residence and the total full-time intake contain a similar relationship. This demonstrates that the residence space allocation is distributed evenly across divisions. Information was received through housing services, provided by the Office of the Vice Provost Students, as well as “Facts and Figures” prepared annually by University of Toronto Office of Planning & Budget.⁴

Undergraduate Students Living in Residence (2016-2019 Average)



Undergraduate Full-Time Intake (2016-2019 Average)



⁴ <https://data.utoronto.ca/reports/facts-and-figures/>

Issues at Hand

Unclear StarPortal Residence Ranking System

When ranking which residence to live in, the choice is challenging especially not knowing how many students in that specific professional faculty would potentially live there. Since language written on StarPortal is vague, it gives very little perspective into why students should rank their residence in their specific way that will impact their Program of Study. Often wording such as “few students are selected” or “meet minimum admit average,” provide little clarity in terms of plausibility to receiving an acceptance.

Lack of Publicly Accessible Information from Residence Websites

Many college divisions do not have any information for prospective professional faculty students living in their residence. This becomes difficult in understanding which residence is the right fit for the specific professional faculty student. Furthermore, when information is written on a website, information is written vaguely, providing unclear ideas for prospective residents. These include:

- “Depending on space available come mid-July, a formal offer of accommodation will then be e-mailed to **a select few professional faculty students** who ranked us as first on MyRes.”⁵
- “You will be asked to rank your residence options in order of preference immediately following confirming your interest, only Engineering and Architecture students who rank Innis as their first preference will be considered for housing at Innis. As demand for Innis Residence is very high, even if you rank Innis first and **meet our minimum admit average** to be considered, this does not guarantee you will be offered residence at Innis.”⁶

Residence Allocation Process Transparency

Applying to residences is a very complicated process for professional faculty students as they are not given their specific options compared to students in the Faculty of Arts and Science. With ambiguous language written on multiple decentralized websites from each of the college and UofT Student Life, it becomes difficult for prospective students to know where to navigate, often with outdated information. There is not one central location or information that is publicly shared in an easily

⁵<http://www.newcollege.utoronto.ca/current-students/residence-at-new-college/new-and-future-residents/residence-at-new-college/how-to-apply/first-year-applications/professional-faculty-students-aspe-peh-music/>

⁶ <https://innisresidence.utoronto.ca/apply/newstudent>

accessible location. This is critical because many incoming students do not understand the structure of how the University of Toronto is organized, making the application process challenging. Prospective students will find it challenging on how to best rank their residence choices and often come from non-accredited sources, such as reddit or word of mouth.

Lack of Professional Faculty Residence Supports

Specifically at the College residences, students in professional faculties are often excluded or left out of the programming events as they are catered towards members in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Although college specific programming is essential in supporting the transition and understanding of that specific community, professional faculties are often lost in terms of receiving faculty-specific information. Information on their registrar, student government, faculty student clubs, job opportunities, etc. are not being disseminated out to these communities.

Difficulty Meeting Other Professional Faculty Students

Those that live in college residences, often students that are placed there are not exposed to meeting members of their faculty community. There are no specific structures in place at the majority of residences to bring professional faculty students together. As a result, the residence experience has favoured students in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

U of T College System Identity

Since professional faculty students are not associated with the college, unless a resident student, many professional faculty students are often forgotten in the identity of the college system. With the many supports and resources offered through the Faculty of Arts and Science and individual college, first-entry professional faculty students are excluded from this very significant identifier in the University of Toronto community.

Lack of Available Spaces in the College Residences

Residence space is an issue and for professional faculty students. Many hope to live on the physical main portion of the St. George campus. Because of the lack of spots and demand to live in the colleges, students are often not receiving their top residence or decide to live off-campus.

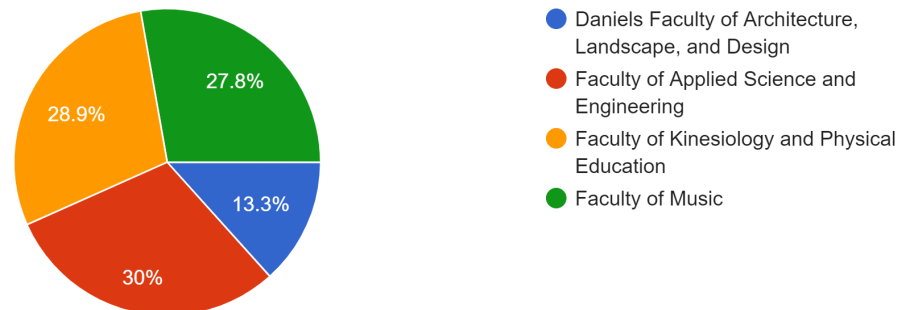


Residence Survey

A survey was put out by the UTSU that aimed at getting general feedback and viewpoints from professional faculty students who mostly had some level of experience with living in residence. There were 90 students who filled out the survey in total, with 83 students having lived in residence for at least one year. Some important takeaways are explored below.

Which First-Entry Professional Faculty do you belong to?

90 responses



Cost of Residence (70%), Meal plan (44%), and Dormitory style (43%) were the most important factors for students when deciding which residence to apply for.

A large number of students cited the student community, convenience, safety, price of living and proximity to the university as key contributing factors to why they chose to live in residence.

Some common concerns students had included a lack of transparency and a lack of information when choosing a residence. Since StarPortal had stated that there were limited spaces for professional faculty students, some students felt that they did not get an understanding of exactly how competitive that space would be, and would have changed their first choice accordingly had the actual number of spaces been made accessible.

Others (especially a large number of Engineering students surveyed) cited Chestnut as an overall negative experience due to proximity to the school and relatively expensive price. Having chosen a cheaper residence, many felt they were financially strained at having to pay a higher price to stay in Chestnut, while simultaneously

having to pay for what they thought was an expensive meal plan they could not afford.

In general, students felt like they did end up having an overall positive experience on Residence, but the process of getting a space on residence made some individuals feel as though they were not a particularly valued member of the UofT community, due to uncertainty, lack of transparency, and sometimes long waitlist times and last minute offers. Certain members of the community also felt like they were more isolated from their professional faculty community as students of the same often small faculty ended up being pretty scattered around campus, and would have preferred a more concentrated community.

Notable Quotes

"It would be helpful if it were clearer to students how and where residence is allocated. My offer of residence for Music came much later and only after I changed the order of preference I ranked the Colleges in. I had to ask my faculty registrars about residence and found out from them which Colleges usually accepted more music students." – **Faculty of Music, Victoria College** (2019-2020)

"The approximate number of professional faculty spots at each college/proportion of professional faculty students whose first choice residence is that college who get a spot could be better publicized: I was interested in living at Vic because of friends who were going there for arts and science and its reputation but didn't apply there because I underestimated the number of profac spots available based on the description available." – **Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering, Innis College** (2017-2018, 2016-2017, 2015-2016)

"Be more transparent about factors that go into res (on Starportal they say how there is limited space for profac but doesn't say what percentage is for profac)" – **Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, Victoria College** (2019-2020)

"The residence life office itself played a very small role in the transition process, but living in residence helped significantly as first-year students faced similar challenges which sparked discussion and built the foundations for the establishment of interpersonal relationships." – **Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering, Chestnut Residence** (2019-2020)

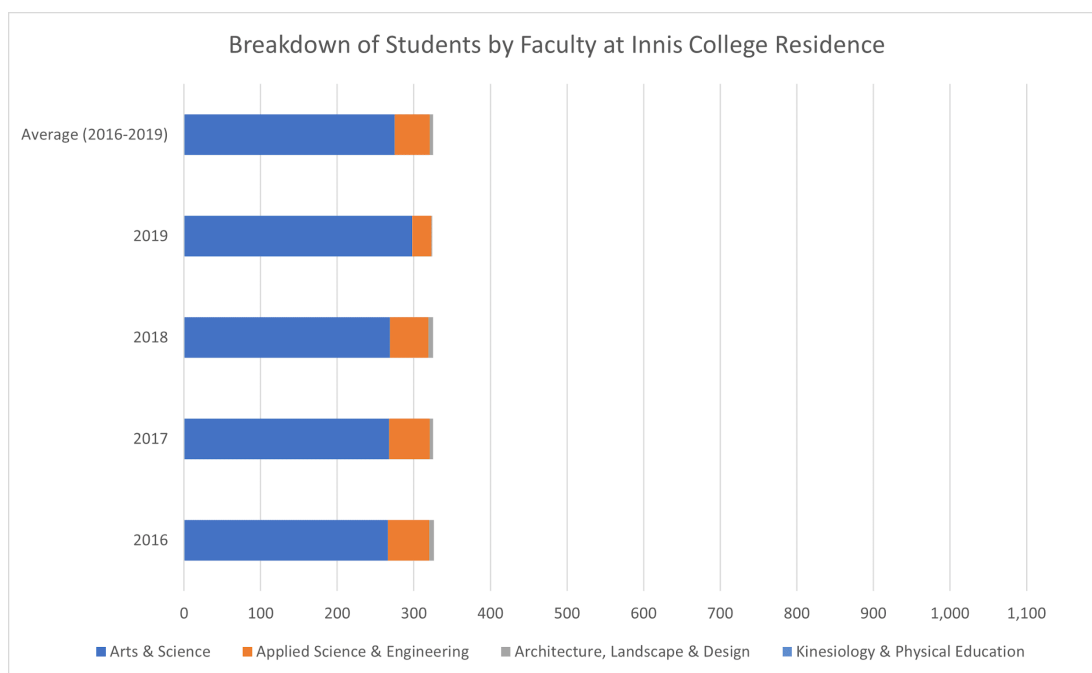
Housing Statistics

To gain an understanding of how many spaces in each residence currently go to each group of professional faculty students, the following graphs were created using housing data provided by the Office of the Vice-Provost Students. Each graph shows the breakdown of students by faculty on a scale of 0-1,150 students (x-axis) for each year, 2016-2019 as well as the 4 year average. Using the data, we can gauge the proportional representation and distribution of each student population in each residence.

Residence Student Demographic Breakdown by Faculty

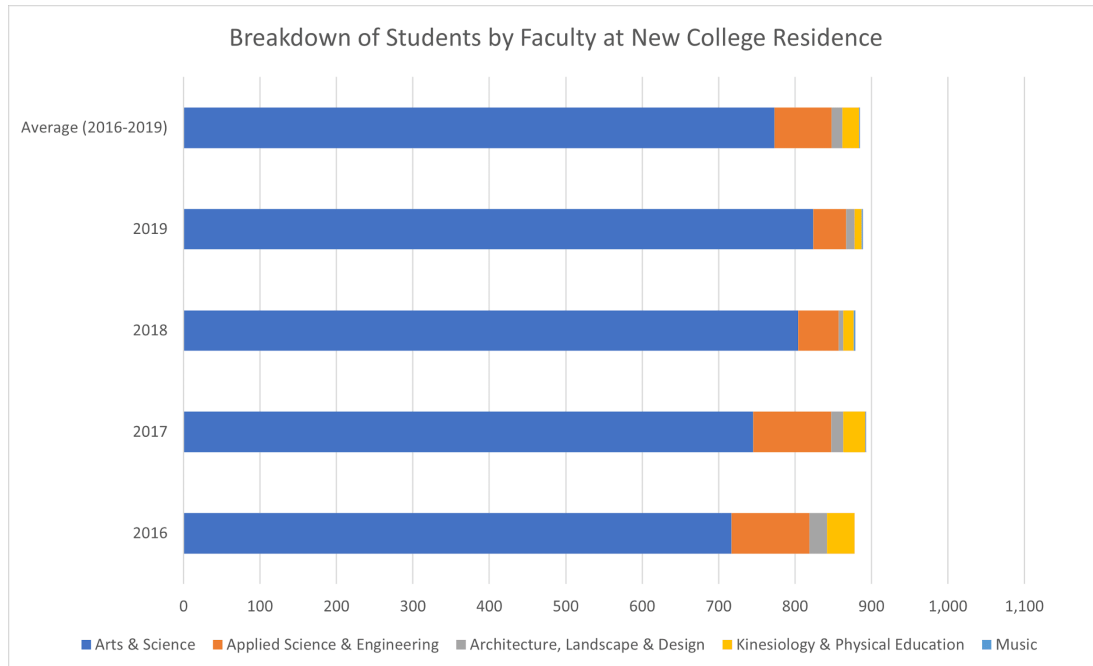
These graphs illustrate that the vast majority of professional faculty students, especially in percentage terms reside at Chestnut residence, and are otherwise scattered and well distributed amongst each college residence.

Innis College

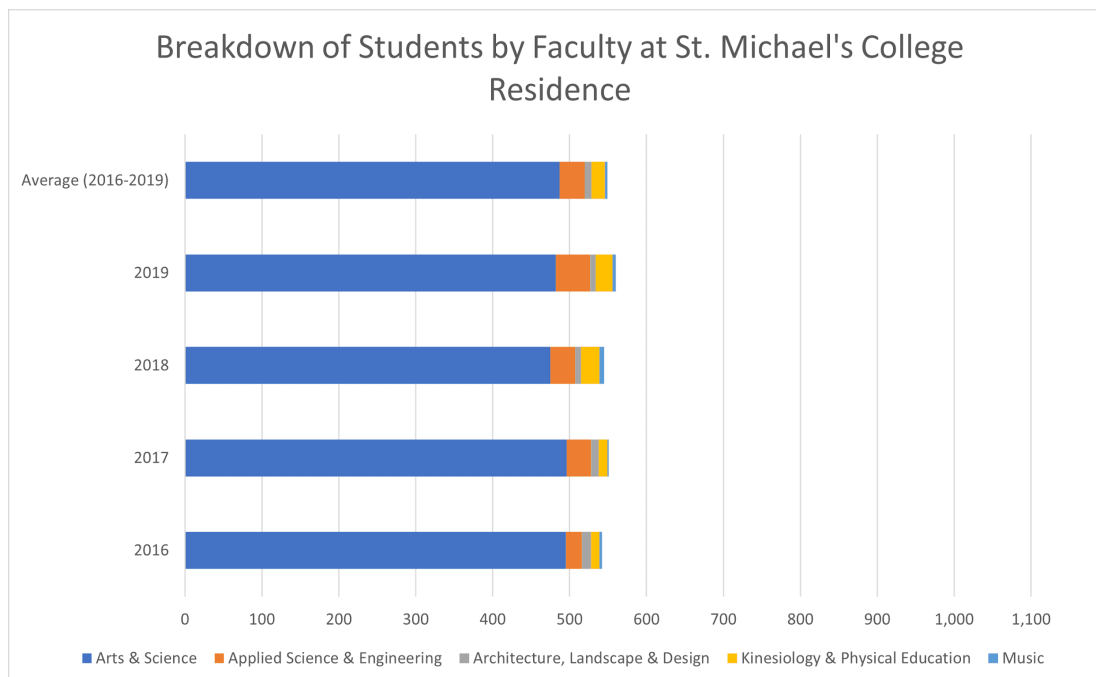




New College

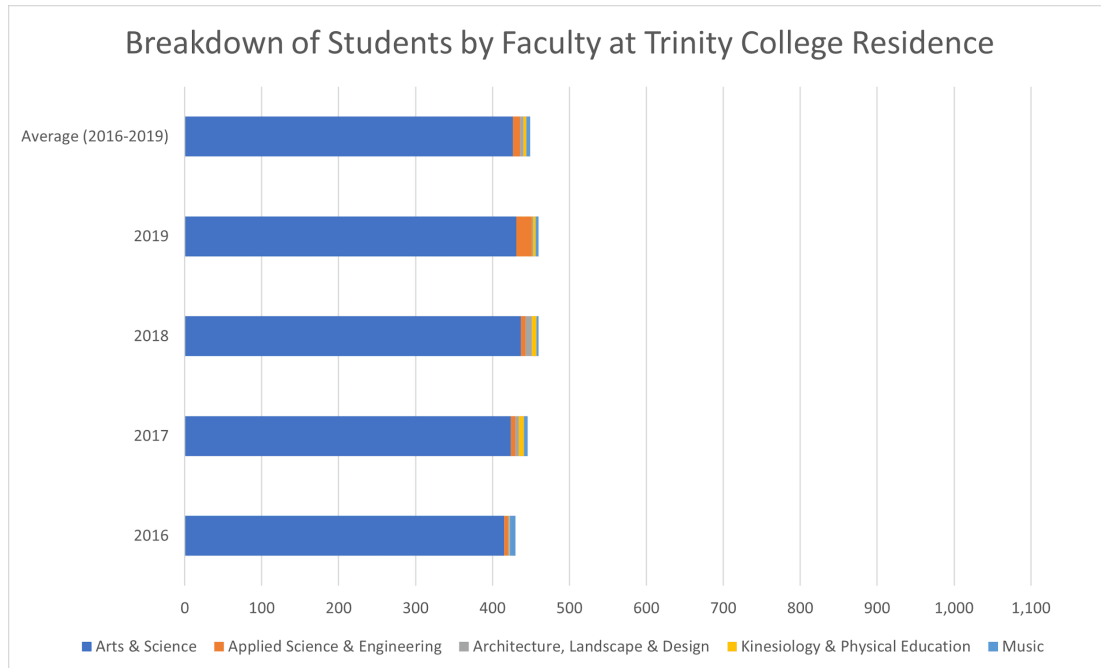


St. Michael's College

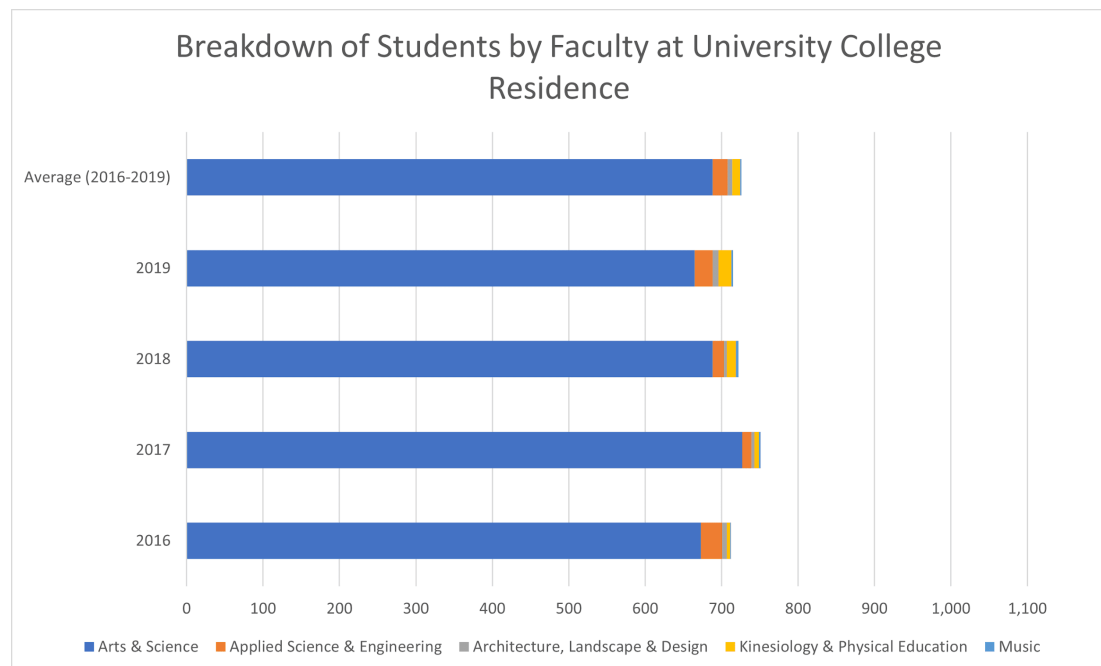




Trinity College

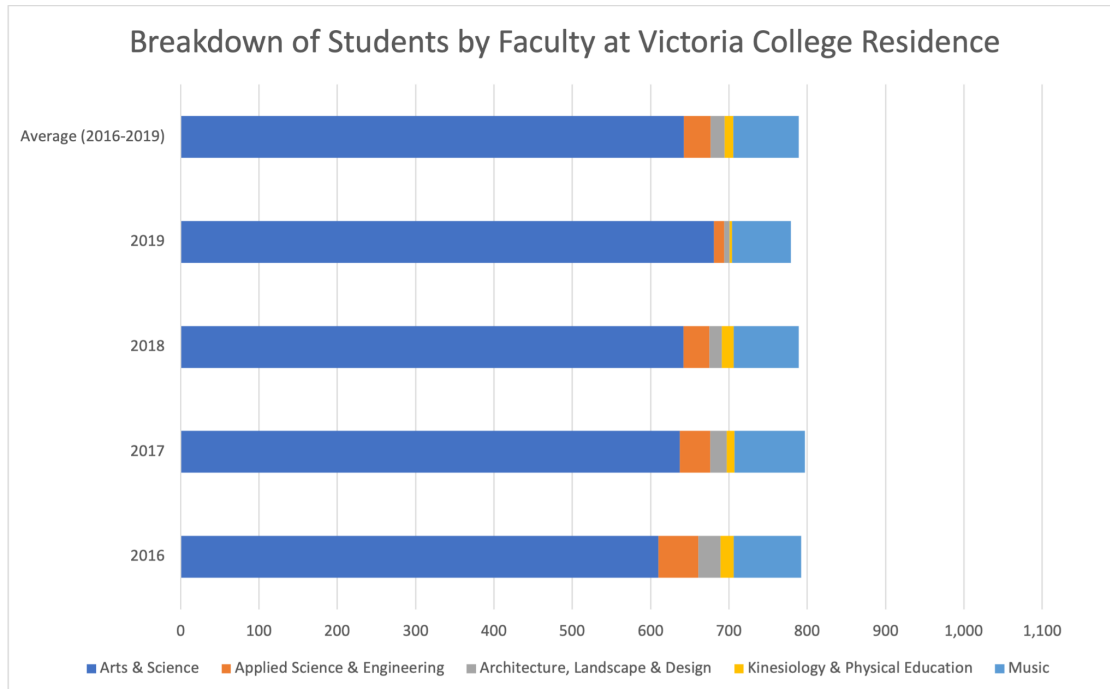


University College

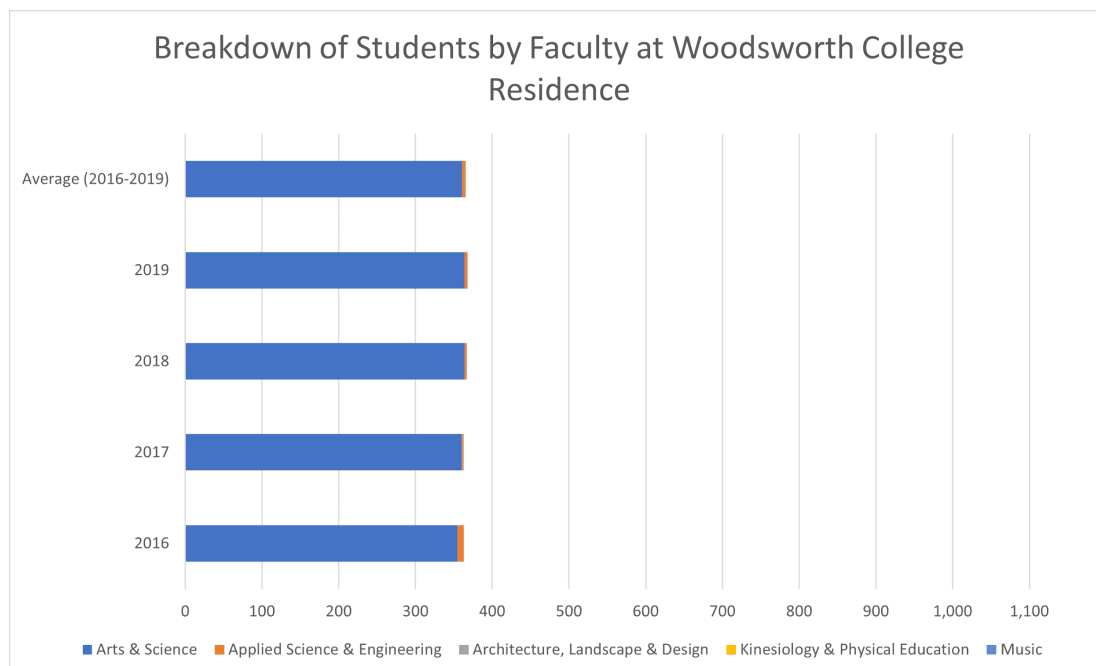




Victoria College

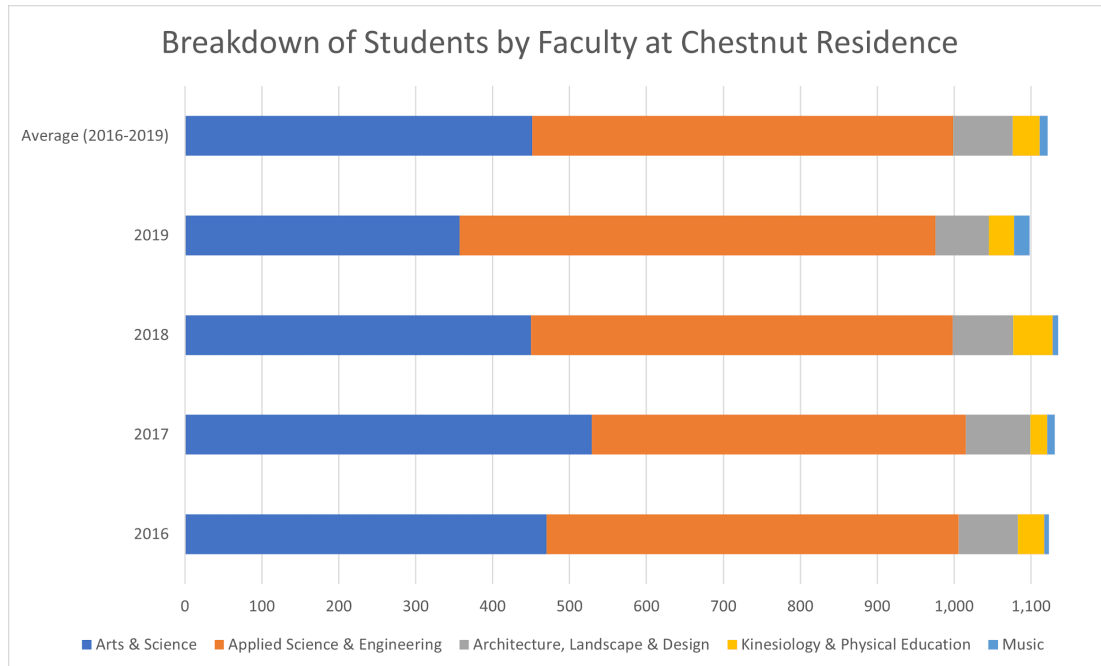


Woodsworth College

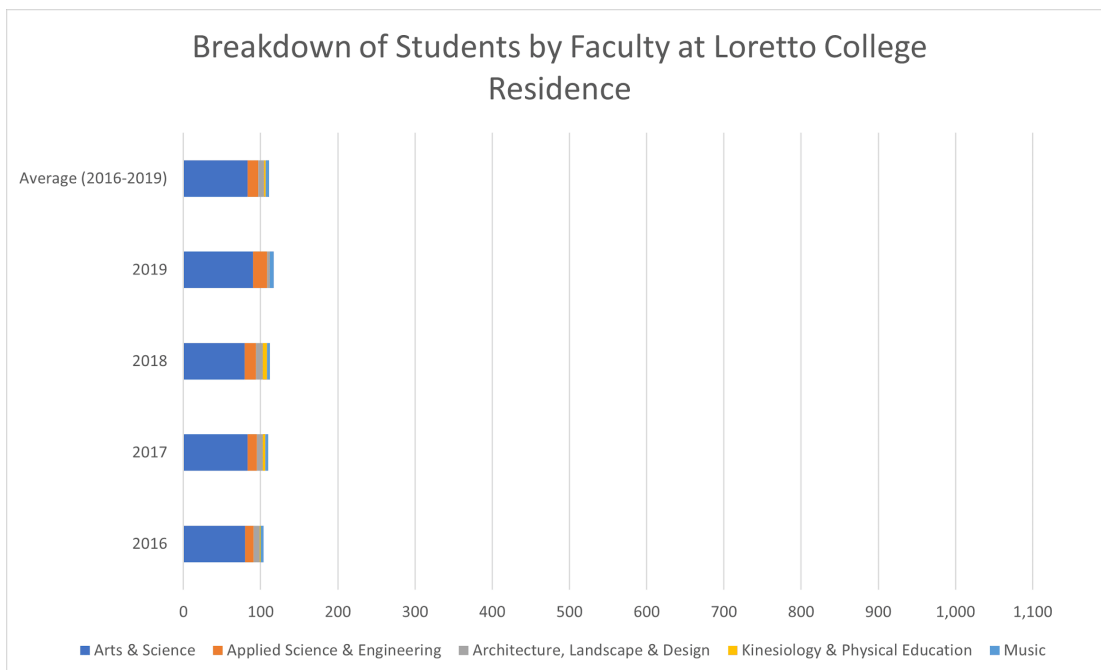




Chestnut Residence



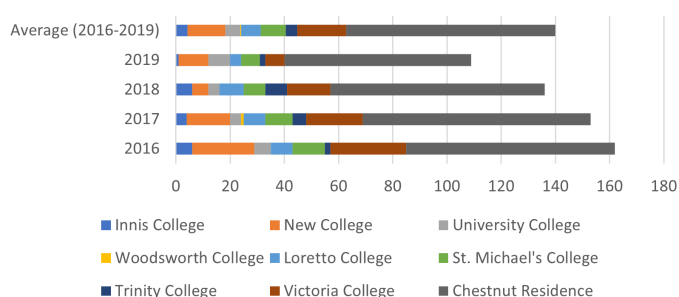
Loretto College



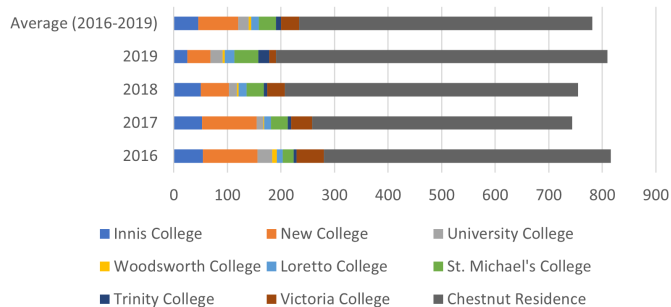
Faculty Student Demographic Breakdown by Residence

The next 4 graphs attempt to show how the students of each individual professional faculty are distributed among each residence, using the same data set presented in the preceding section. It is clear when visualizing the data that most professional faculty students live in Chestnut Residence, with the exception of Music students in Victoria residence.

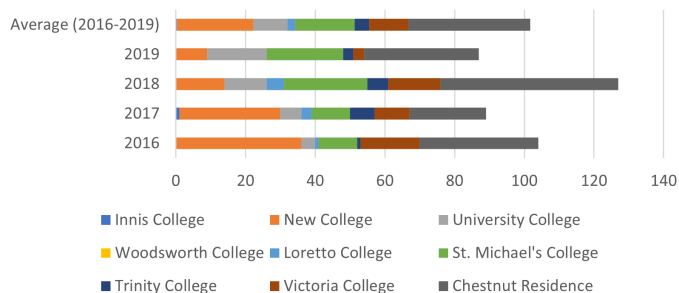
Breakdown of Architecture, Landscape & Design Students by Residence



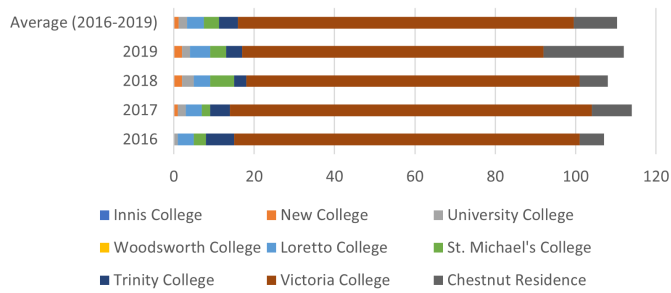
Breakdown of Applied Science & Engineering Students by Residence



Breakdown of Kinesiology & Physical Education Students by Residence



Breakdown of Music Students by Residence



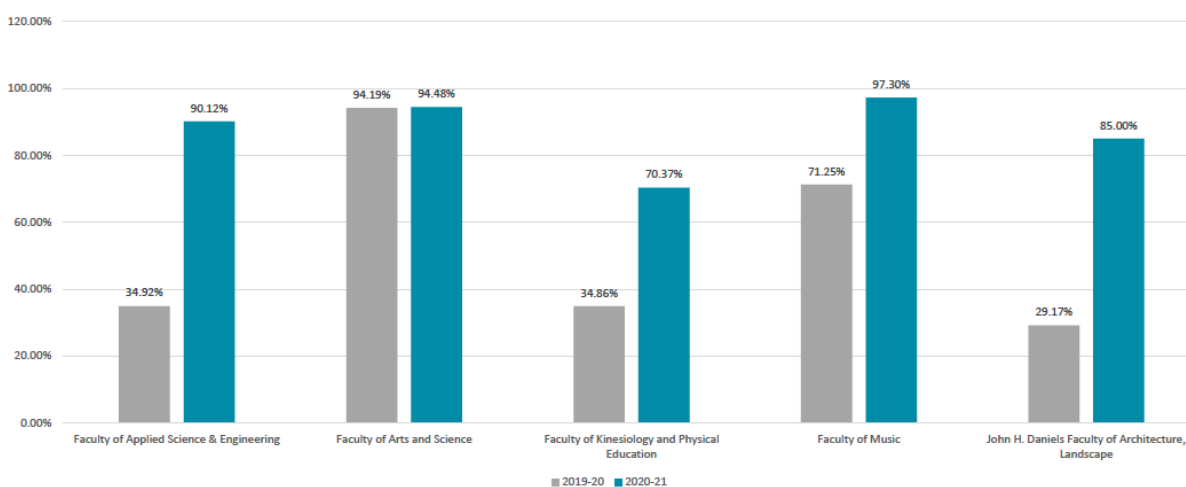
Addendum: Residence Preference Statistics

This addition is provided by UofT Housing Services. Since the dissemination of this report in March 2021, Housing Services has communicated that there was a new updates and responses to this report.

The new StarPortal was developed in consultation with the residences and extensive input and testing by students. It centralizes all residence application steps and information in one place and reduces the number of steps required of students. Students are now provided with information on the number and percentage of students from their faculty/college in each residence the previous year. Professional faculty students are also no longer asked to rank all residences, but to provide us with a minimum of two other residences they would like to be considered for, in addition to the residence they are most likely to be placed at. This resulted in a significant increase in the number and percentage of professional faculty students who received a residence space at the residence they indicated was their first preference for consideration, compared to the previous year/process.

The implementation of this new system at first glances seems to show tangible and positive changes. Though only in its first year of process, as well as these statistics were conducted during COVID-19, when the the bed capacity is much lower, the university is making positive steps to better the student experience for Professional Faculties.

STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED THEIR 1ST PREFERENCE



Conclusion

The findings of this report concludes that the residence allocation process is fair in terms of the first-year guarantee and the demographics of total undergraduate in-take. On the basis of compiled statistics and survey responses, there is a need to acknowledge the challenges professional faculty students face as they apply and live in residence. The overarching concern is lack of transparency given to professional faculty students in making informed decisions on their residence experience.

While compiling information for this report, the most challenging piece is the lack of information posted on public websites at each division. It is essential that divisions become more transparent with disseminating information to professional faculty students and provide concrete answers to how students are selected for their respected residence.

The Residence Survey uncovered the concerns facing the competitive nature of the application process that is not outlined adequately. This causes students to blindly consider what residence fits the individual student needs. Furthermore, it also revealed the lack of direct supports from the residence in terms of specific professional faculty university transition. Although each division is responsible for their orientation and transition, there is a calling for the residence office to aid in this transition piece as well.

The Housing Statistics demonstrate where the majority of students from each faculty are found and the breakdown to the popular locations for which particular professional faculties are placed. With this information, it is highly recommended that these graphs are published in a publicly accessible manner such that prospective students will be able to make informed decisions for when they rank their residences.

Furthermore, there must be more embedded supports for professional faculty students living in residences. Whether it be through integrating more faculty-based programming, faculty resource provisions, or clear communication, professional faculty students feel isolated from the residence community. It is vital to intersect each residence life office into the specific needs of our professional faculty students.

In the opinion of the UTSU, it is highly encouraged that the university rethink their approach to tackling the residence experience for professional faculty students. This will enable a better transition into university life, especially for first-year students, as residence is a fantastic opportunity to ease their next step in their academic career.



Recommendations

Short Term Recommendations

- **Increase transparency for students by publishing the approximate total number of spaces allotted for professional faculties in each residence.**
 - This can help students decide which residence to place as their first choice, and help manage their expectations. This is important to be able to aid in the application process for university applicants wishing to understand the process as a professional faculty student
- **Release more information on the residence life experience as a specific professional faculty student living in that residence.**
 - Having a Architecture, Engineering, Music, and KPE student share their residence life experience on a website could help provide lenses for prospective students and what potentially they could look forward to when they join that specific college community. In addition, it will show which community will be the right fit for each prospective professional faculty student.
- **Centralize residence specific information and the application process for prospective professional faculty students.**
 - Provide clarity and recommendations for professional faculty students on how best to rank their residence choices. For example, if many KPE students have traditionally lived at New College, writing that out on a website will help KPE students in making their decision.
- **Increase collaboration between residence offices and professional faculty registrars.**
 - By connecting these two groups, residence offices could provide the necessary support that the faculty registrar provides to connect professional faculty students back to the faculty. This is essential in the transition piece of residence life, helping all first-years understand the resources available to them.
- **More social programming aimed at fostering community among professional faculties students.**
 - Professional Faculty students have indicated that it is often challenging to foster a community among their cohort. We believe the implementation of additional funding for school wide social programming would help alleviate this problem.
- **Distribution of Professional Faculty specific resources on Residence.**
 - Distributing and having available specific resources for professional faculty students at each residence, such as registrar information, faculty-specific involvement opportunities, helpful links, portals, and professional resources specific to each faculty would be beneficial to



helping students feel taken care of. Individual Don's should also be given training to help them better refer professional faculty students in the right direction.

- **Where necessary, hire residence dons that reflect the professional faculty community.**
 - Residence Dons are often the first point of contact for students living in residences. When supporting professional faculty students specifically, it is imperative that diverse academic perspectives are inserted into building each team. When students in professional faculties have concerns, the residence life team could lean on them for best ways in supporting that specific professional faculty community.

Long Term Recommendations

- **Creation of dedicated residence spaces on campus specifically to help foster community amongst Professional Faculty students.**
 - Dedicated and protected spots specifically designated for professional faculty students in new residence projects, such as the upcoming Spadina-Sussex Residence.