

## **OFF CAMPUS HOUSING TIP SHEET: HOW TO FINE WHAT YOU WANT**

### **BEFORE LOOKING AT APARTMENTS**

- Be aware of your price limit before hand (remember to include utilities and possible first/last month rent as a deposit).
- Calculate the total cost for living off campus with this online calculator: <http://www.kiplinger.com/personalfinance/tools/housing.html>.
- In calculating the cost, remember that some places may require your monthly income to be as much as two to four times the amount of rent per month. This may require you to have a parent as a co-signer on the lease.
- List the pros and cons of on and off campus housing to make sure off campus housing is what you really want.
- Use rental websites to make sure you can afford the area you would like to live in.

**NOTE:** Many students find that their off campus housing arrangements fall through at the last minute. Ensure that you and your potential roommates are equally committed to living together and working through agreements with one another. Visit our website: [www.lmu.edu/housing](http://www.lmu.edu/housing) under “Resources and Help” for a Roommate Agreement Form.

### **SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT APARTMENT**

- Understand that location and size of the apartment determines price.
- Smaller apartment complexes may not have the need or resources to advertise online. If you know what areas you are interested in, drive by and look for “For Rent” signs instead of relying entirely on the internet.
- Rental Landlords don’t always return phone calls. Be persistent but understand that you may not want to live in an apartment where the landlord is unresponsive because they may be just as unresponsive when you live there.

### **GATHERING IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

- Determine exactly what is included with the rent. While the rent may appear pricy, it may include all utilities and extra services.
- Make sure you know enough about the surrounding area:
  - How close are the laundry facilities?
  - If you do not have a car, how close and reliable is the public transportation system?
  - What are the Crime Statistics in the area?
  - Check the sexual predators online resource for potential offenders at [www.meganslaw.ca.gov](http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov).

### **VISITING A POTENTIAL APARTMENT**

- Be aware of the apartment’s design.

- Do you want a large kitchen, a balcony, etc.?
- Will you be uncomfortable if the bedrooms are too close to one another?
- Do you find it hard to live on a bottom floor with people above you?
- Will your current furniture fit in the apartment?
- Are the hallways or stairways too narrow to fit a large items?

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK THE LANDLORD**

- Will they run a credit check?
- How many roommates do they allow?
- How do they handle problems in their buildings such as plumbing issues, noise, etc.?
- How ample is parking around the area?
- Has the apartment had any recent burglaries?
- Will walls be painted and carpet be cleaned before move in?
- What is the demographic around the area? Are the neighbors mostly college students, elderly, families etc.?

### **THINGS TO BRING WHEN VIEWING A POTENTIAL APARTMENT**

- A checkbook in case you need to put a security deposit down that day because some places may require an interest payment which you will receive back if you do not get the rental agreement.
- Copies of your most recent bank statement(s) or latest pay stubs because most renters require proof of income.
- Pencil and paper in order to jot down notes from the landlord and even potential damages in and around the apartment that you are concerned about having fixed before you move in.

### **TIPS FOR MOVING**

- Find friends with large cars (offer to buy them pizza) to avoid moving costs. If you must use a moving van, rent a truck through a company like UHaul to drive yourself; many truck rental places only require you to be over 18, not 25 to rent trucks and moving equipment. Companies like UHaul have different sizes and you can pick the smallest size that fits your furniture.
- When transitioning from one apartment to another, if you stick with the same utility company (such as the same cable company), you may receive a discount or special offer for retaining their services. If they don't offer, make sure to ask about it.
- Consider the possibility of getting Renter's Insurance to cover potential damages and loss. Check with your car insurance providers for rates before seeking outside companies. Ask about discounted rates.
- Complete an Apartment Condition Form before moving items in. Take pictures of all damages. Sign, attach pictures, and give a copy to your landlord (this will help you avoid being billed for damages when you move out).