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URBS101 – Urban Life

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March 9th, 2020

Brookdale Campus: Community Center and Home for Many

As one of the four residence halls students at Hunter College can apply for, the Brookdale Campus is the oldest standing building which holds the largest number of students out of the four: over 600 students. Being the oldest and the largest makes Brookdale the most known residence hall of Hunter, and yet it seems that most students don't know about its history, and what Brookdale as a place means to the community.

Located in Kips Bay, on 25th Street and 1st Avenue, Brookdale Campus is situated on what students call “The Hospitals Avenue”. To the North you can find Bellevue Hospital Center and the Tisch Hospital, and on the South side you can find the Veterans Affairs Hospital and Mount Sinai Beth Israel. It only made since then, that at 1969 Hunter College Department of Nursing expanded and moved to the facilities of the Bellevue Hospital School of Nursing, which now holds the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing, CUNY's flagship nursing program.



Nursing Students' Bikes at The School of Nursing

Today, Brookdale Campus serves not only as the nursing school facility and a residence hall for hundreds of students, but it also houses several nurses that are employed at Bellevue Hospital, holds the Brookdale Center of Aging, maintains a public pool for the community, and hosts Project Happy on the weekends – a program for children, youth and young adults with disabilities that provides individual and team sports, and recreational activities.



Project Happy Participants

As a residence hall in Manhattan, Brookdale Campus is a “hot commodity”. Especially when living in it requires being approved and selected from thousands of students that have submitted applications months in advance, and even more so, where the price of living is affordable, and moves around \$1,000 per month. Well, all of this is



Typical Student's Dormitory Room

even more “prestigious” when considering the Macaulay Honors Program students, who are given the option to live for free at Brookdale for a period of 2 years or receive a small amount of money instead. Needless to say that living close to Hunter’s main campus instead of commuting for hours from all across NYC, and not paying rent in the one of the most expensive cities in the world drives the majority of the program to request --and immediately be approved-- to live at Brookdale. The same applies for any student who is on one of the athletic programs Hunter has to offer. What about the rest of the students that might have a more dire economic situation? Like international students that already pay *triple* the

tuition of an out-of-state student, or an in-state student that pays thousands of dollars a year unlike the honor students that already receives free education? Hunter does not seem to care about cases like theirs. Moreover, in the Fall 2019 semester when dozens of Macaulay students were about to leave after the free-2-year-living situation expired, they protested, and after very little effort they got to stay for another *third* year, while almost a hundred students were denied housing once again.

Being on the topic of Brookdale's housing policy, how come a public school that is known to provide almost or completely free education for NYC residents does not provide free housing for its students? This answer can be answered by going on a deeper dive researching the history of the CUNY

system. How come there is still a nurse living on one of the floors when students have complained that she makes them feel uncomfortable one semester after another? Maybe by interviewing the nurse



Brookdale Campus

and Brookdale's administration we can learn more on her specific situation and become more understanding. For the past few years there have been rumors about Brookdale's closure and approaching demolition to become a local dumpster for the city, but the community refused to let it happen. Are there any future plans to get rid of Brookdale, a place that houses so many students in need, provides programs for people with disabilities and the aging folks that live in the area, and take away little kids' swimming lessons? Let's hope that won't happen, but if any concern might arise, be sure the community won't let such resolutions pass without a fight.