



STUDENT HOUSING TRENDS: TOMORROW'S RESIDENTS TODAY

2013 NAA Student Housing Conference & Exposition reveals what's important to the next generation of renters.

Attendance reached record numbers at the sixth annual 2013 NAA Student Housing Conference & Exposition at ARIA Resort in Las Vegas, as more than 930 apartment professionals networked with peers, expanded their industry knowledge at education sessions and met with supplier partners during the three-day event.

The breakout session lineup included topics such as serving an international student population, managing catastrophic loss, incorporating mobile technology in maintenance, averting the legal risks associated with social media, designing for Millennials and turning around a distressed asset.

"The breakout session, 'Social Media: The Latest on Embracing the Opportunities and Averting the Risks,' was my favorite," said attendee Veronica Gumpl, Community Manager of Ames, Iowa-based South Duff. "You think you know nearly everything about the topic, but you don't realize the many nuances of social media—not to mention the fact that social media is changing by the second. The attorney on the panel spoke about the legalities associated with social media and tied them together with practical information for operators. The information really made sense and I will take it back to the office with me."

Other highlights included Michael Wood, SVP of TRU, who opened the conference with the general session, "Youth Truths: The Millennial State of Mind," revealing some unexpected findings about today's teens and tomorrow's renters.

Among the findings, 63 percent of teens and 67 percent of 20-somethings who were surveyed said they would rather have

a secure life that's not exciting rather than an exciting life that's not secure. Also surprising to the majority of attendees, 71 percent of teens and 73 percent of 20-somethings said they would prefer a smart partner/spouse who is not all that good looking rather than a hot partner/spouse who is not all that smart.

Such responses underscored the importance of learning more about the (often unexpected) mindset of the typical Millennial in order to better serve them as customers.

In addition to Wood's entertaining session, attendees also enjoyed an informative panel discussion featuring six executives from some of the largest companies in the student housing industry. Moderated by Richard Kelly, Publisher of Student Housing Business, the "Exchange & Engage" panel featured executives Julie Bonnin, COO, Asset Campus Housing; Bob Clark, CEO, Peak Campus Management; Jennifer Clince, COO, The Collier Companies; Scott Duckett, COO, Campus Advantage; Miles Orth III, EVP & COO, Campus Apartments; and Christine Richards, COO & SVP, EdR; who addressed everything from lease-up problems to the most challenging markets in student housing and a review of the 2013 lease-up.

The conference concluded with the closing general session and luncheon, "The Millennial Immersion Session," that featured eight University of Las Vegas (UNLV) students living in both dormitories and off-campus rental housing who commented on the findings of a TRU research project and participated in an audience Q&A.

Among the highlights of the session, moderated by Christian



Keynote Speaker Michael Wood (left), TRU, opened the conference with the general session, “Youth Truths: The Millennial State of Mind,” revealing some unexpected findings. UNLV students (above) share what they’re looking for in student housing.



Ruzich, Research Director for TRU, most student panelists agreed that price was the No. 1 factor when finding a place to live—even more so than location. They also agreed that they would prefer a 9-month lease, as most live elsewhere during the summer.

“For a first-time attendee such as me, the conference has been quite an eye-opener,” said Arthur Troilo III, Attorney and Counselor at Law for a Texas-based property management law firm. “I’m overwhelmed with the amount of data out there on the perspective of the Millennial generation, especially as it applies to social media and information technology. The sessions gave me a good snapshot of where trends are heading and what marketers in the know are doing to attract tech-savvy customers. I have to now catch up—and share the information with my clients.”

More than 135 exhibiting companies filled the NAA Exposition, which was well-received by attendees. Sponsors included American Campus Communities, Apartment Guide, Campus Advantage, Campus Apartments, CoreLogic SafeRent, CORT, DISH Network, Ecologic Furniture, EdR, Grand Campus Living, NCC Business Services of America Inc., RealPage Inc., Student Housing Business, University Furnishings, and University Student Living. Media partners included Affordable Housing Finance, Apartment Finance, Multifamily Executive, Show My Property TV, Student Housing Business and *units* Magazine.

“The value in exhibiting at this conference is that you are surrounded by people living, breathing and sleeping the same industry you’re in,” said Trina Rogers, Chief Operating Officer, Off Campus Partners. “The value is in those offline conversations you have with other attendees about what they’re experiencing—what

works and doesn’t work. It’s a good space.”

Continuing a three-year tradition, conference attendees participated in the NAA Exhibitor Passport Program. Participating exhibitors each had a square on the passport—which each attendee received—with their company’s name and booth number.

Attendees who received stamps for visiting all participating exhibitor booths were entered in a drawing for the chance to win Bose noise-canceling headphones, poker chips, American Express gift cards, iTunes gift cards and more—the top prize of which was an iPad Mini with an iTunes gift card.

Speakers, NAA Student Housing committee members and attendees alike agreed that the conference was a huge success.

“There are many conferences that attract student housing property management professionals, but I view the NAA Student Housing Conference as the single best event of the year for student housing real estate professionals,” said Miles Orth, 2013 NAA Student Housing Committee Chair. “It has the right mix of educational sessions along with great networking opportunities. Our company brings our senior operations team to this event each year to help them develop their skills and meet excellent speakers and other professionals. I would encourage other organizations to bring their team and attend the best student housing operations event of the year.” NAA

Research from TRU Closing General Session Speaker available at www.naahq.org/SHC

