

Tulane offering student housing to medical personnel and volunteers

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Mayer Residence Hall is one of three residential buildings being offered to visiting medical personnel and volunteers. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Louisiana has one of the fastest-growing rates of COVID-19 infections, with New Orleans being the state's epicenter of this pandemic. To address a housing need for relief workers coming to help the city, Tulane University is opening up available space in its residence halls, which just two weeks ago were filled with students.

“I cannot think of a better use for this temporarily vacated space than making it available to shelter those who are coming to our aid during this crisis,” Tulane President Mike Fitts said. “We want to do what we can to help these heroes as they bring healing and comfort to our community.”

The university is preparing to provide 345 beds in three student residence halls on the uptown campus for federal, state, or municipal employees and/or vetted government contract employees. Linens and pillows will be available for all guests and they’ll have access to free laundry services in the buildings.

“There could be a big influx of volunteers or medical personnel from out of state and it makes sense to house them here. Space is also available for Tulane clinicians or medical staff should they require it,” said Brian Johnson, assistant vice president for Housing and Residence Life/Campus Recreation at Tulane University. “It means a lot to be in a position to help the city and state.”

Tulane went from nearly 4,100 students living in uptown campus housing just a few weeks ago to only 230 after all classes shifted online because of COVID-19 concerns, said Johnson.

Three residence halls will be available for COVID-19 response personnel: Greenbaum, Mayer and Josephine Louise. The mostly double rooms will be used as singles, and each temporary resident will have a private bathroom. All rooms have Wi-Fi access and a mini-fridge. The residence halls selected to house the relief workers are located away from the core of the campus, where 230 Tulane students, who were unable to return to their hometowns, are still residing. Campus health officials believe housing the relief workers on-campus does not raise the risk of exposure for these students, as the two groups will not share common areas.

Dining services is preparing to provide up to 700 boxed meals per day. The university is also ready to offer shuttle service from Tulane's uptown campus to the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

"I'm proud of our team and campus services for being able to turn over these buildings so quickly and get them ready for the weeks ahead," Johnson said. "We want to do this for the people and city we love."