Contraband: Resident assistants required to record what they see, smell, hear

Continued from page 1

illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia.

In the five complexes, 445 residents were documented for alcohol violations in fall 2004, and 198 residents were documented for incidents involving marijuana. However, the percent of residence hall incidents in which students were actually convicted of the documented violation is unknown, according to University Housing.

RAs are responsible for maintaining a healthy environment in their halls, Carson

said, and balancing rules with the long-term safety and attitude of a hall sometimes requires RAs to use their discretion.

University junior Michelle Rose, an RA at Barnhart for 2003-04, said RAs are supposed to write up students they believe have been drinking alcohol and then let them go. She said the process ignores student-safety issues.

"It's not about their safety," Rose said. "It's about writing them up."

Rose and Carson said the policy could deter students from coming home when they've been drinking, because they want to avoid a housing violation and the \$15 fee resulting from a visit with a complex director.

"Housing is basically saying if you're going to drink, do it somewhere else," Carson said, "which could include someone walking or driving somewhere else when it might not be safe."

"I'd rather have them come back drunk than have to stay the night somewhere where they don't want to," Rose said. "It's a decision they shouldn't have to make."

Barnhart and Riley Complex Director Stephen Jenkins said the problem doesn't rest in a student's decision of whether to come home after drinking.

"The bad decision didn't come as to whether they should come home or not," Jenkins said. "The poor decision was made when they chose to get so intoxicated they weren't able to be safe

somewhere or feel safe coming back to the residence halls."

Director of Residence Life Sandy Schoonover said many students who come home drinking

don't get written up by their RAs.

"There are many students who come home, who are intoxicated and go immediately to their rooms to go to bed," Schoonover said. "The residents who come home, who are intoxicated and are noisy, who are belligerent or who are creating damage in the residence halls, those are typically the ones who end up being documented."

A current RA, who asked not to be named because of his contract with

University Housing, said the documentation process is subjective.

"There are rules," the RA said, "but there are so many interpretations of those rules. Residents sign a contract that is supposed to be specific, but it isn't specific."

He said what constitutes a noise violation to RAs varies, with some residents getting documented for watching television too loud, while others get away with hosting parties.

Former RAs Carson and Rose agreed.

"It's not enforced equally across the board," Carson said. "Some RAs will write you up for anything. There really isn't a whole lot of consistency."

"I had two write-ups," Ros said. "Some people have 30."

University freshman and Barnhart resident Brian Shen said he's noticed a discrepancy in the way residence hall rules are enforced.

Some residents are singled out as "problems," he said, leading to more focus on their rooms and more write-ups. In addition, the punishments vary, but not according to the violation, he said.

"There will be drunk girls running across the hall, but I get a knock on my door," Shen said.
"When people are dripking, com-

"When people are drinking, complex directors say you're guilty by association, so we should all get written up."

But in a recent incident in which people were drinking, some of the students received

only noise violations, while he was cited for six different violations, he said.

In addition, he said he has had to take multiple classes for receiving alcohol violations, while other people usually take just one.

Jenkins said the RAs don't actually determine whether a violation has occurred in their halls.

"We don't ask RAs to determine whether someone has been drinking," Jenkins said. "We ask them to record what they see, smell or hear."

Rose said the write-ups she gave occurred when she was doing rounds in

the residence halls, walking through the halls to make sure things were quiet and secure.

RAs typically do two rounds each night, Schoonover said. Rose and Carson said Barnhart typically has three or four. Jenkins said the number of rounds is determined by individual complex directors, based on residents' concerns and on previous hall problems.

"To be honest with you, I don't have a formula," Jenkins said, adding that different complexes have different needs.

Once documented for a possible violation, the judicial process a student goes through also relies on discretion.

"We try to

treat each student on a case-by-case basis," said Chris Loschiavo, the director of Student Judicial Affairs. He

said if a complex director or judicial officer determines a student is responsible for a specific incident, he or she chooses a punishment based on what he or she believes the student needs to learn from the situation.

Rose said she was concerned the process wasn't consistent or clear enough for students. She said RAs go through residents' rooms several times a year. Residents are notified when this will happen, but they may not realize they can be documented for violations during these routine checks, she said.

"I honestly don't think they understand their rights," Rose said. "If students did know we were going through their rooms, there wouldn't be so many write-ups. They're paying rent. They did sign a contract, but it's their home for that year."

Schoonover said students "benefit" when written up for violations based on evidence that was gathered without a right to search, because the violation is dropped in such circumstances. For instance, RAs can look in students' refrigerators to check for perishable items during seasonal room checks, but they cannot open a refrigerator to look for alcohol without a student's permission when dealing with

"University Housing wants students to understand their rights in the residence hall system," Schoonover said. "Students' constitutional rights do not stop when they enter a residence hall."

potential rule violations.

Schoonover said University Housing has to "weigh the concerns that we have for an individual as well as our concerns for the community."

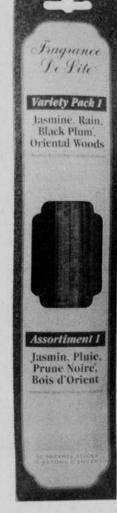
"We have more than one student to think about," Schoonover said. "In a floor or in a hall, we have anywhere from 30 to 60 students that we have to think about. We have to make those decisions based on that."

In addition, the number of complaints the housing department receives about noise and alcohol in the residence halls from residents and their parents outweighs the number of students who get documented for violations, she said.

Rose and Carson said students will likely continue to drink regardless of the rules, and University Housing should consider helping them do it more safely.

"If you're a parent, you'd much rather know they're drinking safely and that they have a place to go back to that's safe," Rose said. "And we're not providing that."

karahansen@dailyemerald.com





S. Eugene & UO 30 W 29th Ave 484-PAPA N. Eugene & Bethel Danebo/Santa Clara 54B Division Springfield/Univ. Commons/Chase & Ducks Village

461-PAPA 1402 Mohawk (7272) **746-PAPA** (7272)

Student & Staff @ UO

Show us your ID and receive 25% off your order!

Not valid with other coupons or specials. Delivery charges may apply.

