

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Orange Coast College aims to open on-campus dorms by fall 2019

[BY JORDAN GRAHAM](#)

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Orange Coast College aims to build and open dorms by fall 2019 as part of a larger project that could make the school the only community college in Southern California to provide on-campus student housing.

For more than a decade, OCC has considered constructing student residence halls. On Thursday, the school revealed that the results of a recent study confirmed there was enough student demand to proceed with the plan.

Up to 1,900 of OCC's 22,000 students would want to live on campus if the option existed, according to the school's housing study. That demand caused a district consultant to preliminarily propose building two four-story dormitories on the campus' undeveloped northwest corner, capable of housing nearly 820 students.

"I don't think the student needs a car," said Rich Pagel, OCC's vice president of administrative services, of the college's reputation as a commuter school. "Just rent a bed, walk to campus and focus on your studies."

For many years, those attending OCC lived in Costa Mesa and surrounding cities, and drove or took the bus to get to campus. But the study revealed that the high cost of renting apartments in Costa Mesa has forced some students to move farther from campus.

"This has become a commuter school just because of the price locally," said Jeremy McKinnon, a student and outgoing president of OCC's military veteran organization, backing the study's findings.

In 2013, only 14 percent of OCC students lived in Costa Mesa. Of the remainder, 14 percent lived in Santa Ana, 13 percent in Huntington Beach, 8 percent in Garden Grove, 6 percent in Irvine and 10 percent outside Orange County.

Matt Bohannon, a vice president for consultant Brailsford & Dunlavey, which conducted the housing study, said surveys revealed a range of students desired on-campus housing, including veterans, teens looking to leave home and older students. The school's international population, which has grown from 640 two years ago to 1,040 this year school, was another interested group.

When Nurhilya Ahmad Damir, 19, came to OCC from Malaysia nine months ago, she had to stay in a local motel for a week while she and other Malaysian students searched for housing. Some of the students could find housing only in Newport Beach. She was lucky enough to find an apartment a block from campus, but had to room with three other students in a two-bedroom unit to afford rent.

"We would have considered (on-campus housing)," Ahmad Damir said. "We'd have to see the details first."

The details are far from finalized, but OCC knows it wants its student housing to be more like an apartment than a traditional dorm. Staff proposed four bedrooms sharing a common space, possibly with a communal kitchen and bathrooms.

OCC did not reveal the price of student housing, but Bohannon said the residence halls could bring in \$400,000 per year for OCC. The school said it would use the revenue to expand student services and library hours, creating more of a residential campus feel.

On-campus housing is part of a larger plan to construct many new buildings and renovate others through 2024 as part of a master plan. That plan projects the school will grow from 22,000 students to 28,332 students by 2020. OCC's Board of Trustees will need to certify a revised version of that master plan, likely in August, for the student housing project to proceed. If all goes to plan, construction could begin in spring 2017.

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