

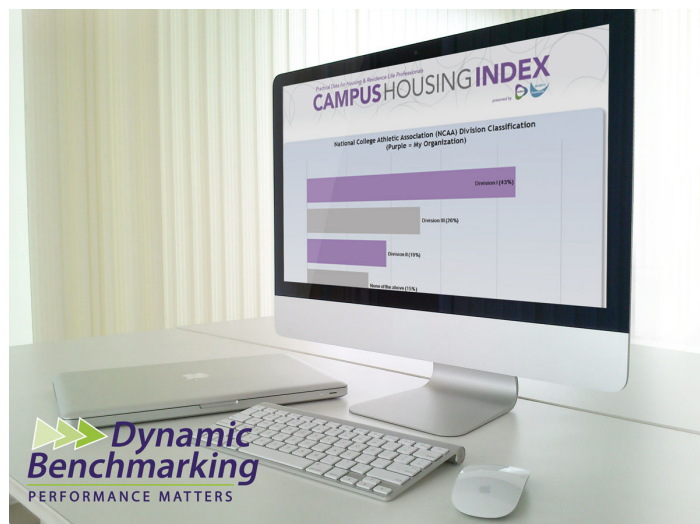
ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY HOUSING OFFICERS – INTERNATIONAL (ACUHO-I)

The Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I) supports resources and programs that further the development of individuals involved in campus housing for over 2,000 colleges and universities around the world. Its primary goal is to be a good steward of financial resources to support the profession and its future, as well as to provide opportunities and access to resources for all people involved in college and university housing operations.

ACUHO-I contracted Dynamic Benchmarking to develop a refined version of its comprehensive operations survey as well as develop a new salary survey to provide valuable business intelligence to its members. The result was a combined financial and operations benchmarking study dubbed the Campus Housing Index (CHI) which is providing a strategic advantage to ACUHO-I members by turning them into strategic-minded, data-driven organizations.

The Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I) is dedicated to developing exceptional residential experiences at colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions around the world. Its members include thousands of campus housing professionals who work at over 2,000 campuses as well as more than 250 companies and organizations whose products and services support the profession's needs.

ACUHO-I helps its members evolve themselves and their institutions through innovative, value-driven member engagement efforts including events, publications, research, career services and online professional development. To that end, ACUHO-I engaged Dynamic Benchmarking to develop a refined version of its comprehensive operations survey as well as develop a new salary survey to provide valuable business intelligence to its members. The result was a combined financial and operations benchmarking study dubbed the Campus Housing Index (CHI) which today is providing a strategic advantage to ACUHO-I members by turning them into strategic-minded, data-driven organizations.



“The ACUHO-I community is very collaborative. Our members are always seeking better ways to leverage the wisdom of the crowd,” comments Shaun Holloway, Senior Director of Information Technology at ACUHO-I. “We wanted to provide them with an intelligent and intuitive means of comparing themselves with one another in different regions and in different collegiate athletic conferences to measure how they’re doing amongst their peers.”

In the past, collecting data was a complicated process that required much interpretation. Traditionally, ACUHO-I had offered separate operations and salary surveys to collect and provide much of this data, but eventually came to Dynamic Benchmarking to refine the process. After some discussion with Dynamic Benchmarking Project Manager, Linda Xavier, it was decided that the association's objectives could best be served with one, comprehensive study and thus, the Campus Housing Index (CHI) was born. The new study would deliver a complete overview of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as well as trend data for campuses and the industry as a whole, to provide members with a sophisticated, yet user-friendly means of accessing and creating reports from the resulting data.

“The Campus Housing Index will serve as the vehicle with which important data will be collected and also represents a place where housing professionals will be able get the answers they need.”

Mary DeNiro, Executive Director

“With thousands of students residing on most campuses, many of them operate like mini cities,” Holloway continues. “These operations manage a huge number of important data points such as budget, capacity, occupancy, programming, staffing, etc., and each of them could benefit from a more efficient means of mining that data to help them make better, more informed, strategic decisions just like the complex operations of municipalities. This is where the value of CHI comes into play and it has created a competitive advantage for us to provide value based on research. The goal of ACUHO-I is to help our members understand how to turn the benchmarking data into a strategic asset and CHI is the core of that plan.”

Being able to track year-over-year trends in one's own performance as well as against peers and the industry as a whole was also a major objective of the study. ACUHO-I opted to use peer cluster filtering in the CHI platform so institutions could select the most similar group of institutions against which to compare themselves. With multi-year data now available, members are able to see year-over-year trends in their own peer groups or as an industry. This information can be very useful for forecasting future trends.

“When you need to justify your multimillion dollar budget to upper management at a major university it's vital to have the data to backup your recommendations and justify your spending decision,” Holloway continues. “CHI is able to show staffing and spending trends at other institutions to support these strategic decisions as well as make a case for changes based on what similar institutions are doing successfully.”

Key Performance Indicators measure and justify multi-million-dollar budgets, and this is where CHI plays a very significant role. KPIs derived from the benchmarking study determine gaps in performance and identify the allocation of resources in specific functional areas as compared to other institutions of similar size. This information also plays a role in how these institutions competitively market themselves to their target audiences.



Of course, the first step in ensuring a successful launch was helping members understand the value of the benchmarking data and how to act on it. To help its members access results and interpret the data successfully, ACUHO-I embarked on a comprehensive educational and marketing campaign to raise awareness about the study, encourage participation and to educate its members on how to use the platform and the data it provided. Through a series of webinars, white papers, presentations, videos and social media campaigns ACUHO-I educated its membership on the value of benchmarking and how to use it to turn their departments into true data-driven organizations.

To date, the program has been tremendously successful with first year participation rates at nearly thirty percent and second year rates climbing to forty percent. ACUHO-I attributes this to good communication with their members and making a strong effort upfront to show the value of benchmarking from the very start. As for continued participation in the study, Holloway says it's simply more of the same — continuing to demonstrate the value of your benchmarking study.

“Be sure members know how to use the platform and the data and that they see value in it. Our members tell us the benchmarking data has helped them get a promotion, a larger budget, or helped justify keeping resources within their organizations. Our presentations, demonstrations and webinars show the proven value of the data and will keep them coming back. ACUHO-I is now a data source for our members as they make data-driven decisions.”

As the costs associated with higher education continue to increase and budgets become more streamlined, campuses must be even more deliberate in their decision-making. To a great degree, this means understanding the nuances of our own organizations and being able to discuss how they compare with other institutions. The functionality of the Campus Housing Index stands to play a significant role in the way professionals in the field manage this process.

Beth McCuskey, President

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<https://www.dynamicbenchmarking.com/clients/acuho-i>