A History of the Department of Residential Life

Residential Life is committed to supporting the academic mission of North Carolina Central University (NCCU) by developing and maintaining living and learning environments that are comfortable and affordable. The vision of the Department is to become a student-centered, dynamic, and progressive well-run organization that is committed to providing clean and inviting facilities, expanding scholarly experiences outside the classroom, creating programs that support and encourage cultural and ethnic diversity, enhancing technology services, and providing caring and competent staff members who offer quality customer service. Over the years, the Department has often times been referred to as Residence Operations, Residence Life/Housing and is currently referred to as the Department of Residential Life.

The slogan that expresses our Unit’s perspective on The Centennial Theme is “Excellence without Excuse.”

The Department has both professional and student staff trained to assist with issues and/or challenges that may arise. The leadership of the Department spans almost five decades. Departmental directors include:

- Mrs. Alma Biggers
- Mr. Robert Smith 1991-1992
- Mrs. Phyllis Shumate 1993-1997
- Dr. Paul Goldblatt 1997-2002
- Mrs. Phyllis Shumate (interim) 2002-2003
- Dr. Jennifer A. Wilder 2003 - present

Just like our academic buildings, NCCU’s twelve residence halls are a blend of old and new architecture. The historic Annie Day Shepard Residence Hall (named for the founder’s wife) was built in 1930 and recently underwent a full renovation. The Benjamin S. Ruffin Residence Hall, named in honor of one of our most illustrious alumni, sits across the street from the main campus and offers students suite-style accommodations. Rush and McLean are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Until 1995, The Residential Life department was housed in Old Senior Dormitory which was demolished in 2006 to allow for expansion of the W. G. Pearson Dining Hall. Residential Life relocated in 1995 to what was previously known as the Women’s Gym, now known as the Student Services Building, where it is currently located.

The philosophy of Residential Life at NCCU has changed. On-campus living facilities are no longer called “dorms.” Residence halls are much more than a place to stash your gear, study, and sleep. Residence halls are places to live, learn, lead, and make friendships that will last a lifetime.

As NCCU persists in its constant growth and change, the Department of Residential Life will also continue to grow and develop to meet students’ needs.

We chose Ms. Shirley Green as an outstanding leader because of her high ideals and principles, her generous spirit, and her persistent efforts to open doors of opportunity for others. For example, she allowed students to remain in residence halls, even if they could not pay for housing by published deadlines. It is reported that she herself paid their housing fees. On some occasions Ms. Green made unoccupied rooms available to homeless people from the surrounding community. In fact, she was generous not only to students and the community; she was even more generous to her staff, actually working to cover the shifts of those who called in sick or became ill while at work. Generous with her time and resources, Ms. Green is remembered for her service to all whose lives she touched.

Prepared by Jennifer Wilder, Ph.D.
Sources: Department Office Records
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The Annie Day Shepard Residence Hall, was constructed in 1930 and renovated in 2005, named after wife of James E. Shepard, founder and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Ruth G. Rush Residence Hall, was constructed in 1937, named in honor of dean of women, teacher, and director of student teaching, 1926-1948 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Angus W. McLean Residence Hall, was constructed in 1937, named in honor of the Governor of the State of North Carolina 1925-1929 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.
The Howard J. Chidley Residence Hall, constructed in 1951, named in honor, of minister at First Congregational Church in Winchester, a member of the Board of Trustees from 1916 to 1921, and a financial supporter and contributor.

The George Street Apartments constructed in 1956.