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## COMMUTER STUDENT SERVICES

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*2020-2021*

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Commuters are a vital part of the Messiah University community. More than 250 full- and part-time undergraduate students live off campus and commute from home during any given academic year. We recognize that commuting students possess different needs than residential students. From managing multiple life roles, to balancing academic with family commitments and work demands, to finding reliable transportation, commuters carry a lot. Because a majority of Messiah students are residential, it may feel like their needs are privileged over and above those of commuters. This is not true. Messiah University is committed to providing equitable access to all university services, engagement opportunities and the total educational process regardless of where a student lives.

This means academic support services (e.g. the Writing Center), student government representation, clubs and organizations, internships, chapel, campus laboratories, library facility, musical and theatre performances, exercise areas, and much more, are all available to commuters. There is also a commuter student lounge located in the basement level of Mountain View Residence Hall.

A Commuter Student Liaison and administrative support for commuters exists within the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership Programs which is located on the second floor of Larsen Student Union. Questions from commuters can be directed to JP Edmunds at ([jedmunds@messiah.edu](mailto:jedmunds@messiah.edu)) or by calling 717- 766-2511, ext. 2098.

## COMMUTER CRITERIA

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### **Commuter Definition:**

A commuter student is a student who is living locally (within a 50-mile distance) and at least one of the following criteria applies:

1. The student is living locally with parents.\*
2. The student is living locally with family members (i.e. grandparents, aunts/uncles).\*
3. The student is classified as having independent status by the Office of Financial Aid and is living locally.
4. The student has non-traditional status (23 years of age and over or married).

\*Parents/family members must be living in the space with the student(s) throughout the duration of the student's commuting status.

**Process:**

If you meet any of the above criteria, your commuter status is valid for the academic year. You will need to sign a housing contract online via The Nest ([www.messiah.edu/TheNest](http://www.messiah.edu/TheNest)) and this will notify the Office of Residence Life of your status. Your contract will include a copy of the policy and it will ask you for your local contact information. If you do not meet the above criteria, you are expected to live on-campus based on the University's on-campus residency requirement. Additionally, if the granting criteria change you must notify the Office of Residence Life and may be subject to meet the on-campus residency requirement. If you have questions, please contact our office at 717-796-5239.

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## OFF CAMPUS HOUSING

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**POLICY**

Messiah University is primarily a residential campus. All single, full-time students under the age of 23 are required to live on campus. Exceptions to the residency requirement are granted to students who meet the above commuter criteria. Junior and senior students may apply for an exception to the residency requirement. Exceptions are very limited and are generally granted when living on-campus is prohibitive to a student's enrollment. Some examples of reasons include: financial hardship as verified by the financial aid office, medical reasons, special diet, etc. In order to be considered for this exception, junior and senior students must complete the below process.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

1. Meet the minimum credit hour requirement (57 credits not including AP or CLEP by the end of your 4th semester) prior to deadline/application.
2. Complete an online off-campus housing orientation quiz. Information about the quiz will be emailed to students if they are approved by the Assistant Director of Housing.
3. Submit a completed off-campus housing application to the Office of Residence Life.
4. Provide an email of support from parent or guardian to the Assistant Director of Housing (*unless classified as an independent student by the Office of Financial Aid*).
5. Maintain good standing with the University. Good standing is defined as not being on academic, chapel, or disciplinary probation within the six months prior to application. In addition, previous alcohol or drug

- violations may prevent a student from being approved to live off-campus.
6. Confirm with the Financial Aid Office that aid package is not affected by living off campus.
  7. Sign off-campus housing agreement on The Nest.
  8. Students should NOT enter into a lease or rental agreement until they have received official approval from the Office of Residence Life. Signing a lease or rental agreement without having received approval may result in being liable to the landlord for rent even while being required to live on campus.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

All students (both traditional and nontraditional) who have been extended the privilege of living off campus remain members of the Messiah University community. They are obligated to honor the Messiah University Code of Conduct, Off-Campus Agreement, chapel requirements and the current student handbook. In addition to these University standards, off-campus students are also required to abide by the local laws and ordinances of their communities. It is expected that students living off campus will be good ambassadors of Christ and Messiah University. In addition to representing Messiah University, as members of this Christian community, we are called to be “salt and light” in the world—this includes our local communities. As such, it is expected that off-campus students will be good neighbors, respectful and considerate of the rights and needs of neighbors, always being sensitive to issues regarding noise, parking, guests, upkeep of dwelling, etc. With regard to these and other “courtesy issues,” it is expected that students living off campus will always defer to the needs of their neighbors in addition to obeying all state and federal laws and local township ordinances. The use, possession, and/or distribution of illegal drugs or alcohol are prohibited for Messiah University students living on or off campus while enrolled during the academic year. (See Alcohol Policy). Off-campus students are responsible for the behavior of their guests. It is also expected that off-campus students will abide by visitation standards outlined for students living in on-campus apartments. (See Visitation Policy).

## **COMMUTER LOUNGE**

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Commuters can take advantage of hanging out in the commuter lounge daily from 8 a.m. to midnight. The commuter lounge is located on the basement level of Mountain View Residence Hall. This lounge includes microwaves, a hot/cold water cooler, a large refrigerator, kitchenette and lockers for commuters and a stationary PC. A campus printer is located just next door in the Southside Learning Commons. Outdoor seating and free coffee, tea, and hot cocoa are also available.