

Last Updated: Spring 2026

## **Simmons Hall Action Plan First-Year Housing Assignments**

### **Simmons Values Statement**

Simmons takes a roommate-first approach towards first-year housing, whereby matching students with compatible roommates is considered the single most important objective throughout the process. A roommate should be someone with whom a student feels comfortable, from whom they can learn, and with whom they can share experiences. Roommate matching is incredibly deliberate and is the most time-intensive part of the Simmons process.

In pursuit of the Simmons community's collective happiness, Simmons's Room Assignment Chairs place students in rooms using a holistic consideration of their stated room preferences. This process is done manually by a small committee of house team members, including the RACs.

No input from other upper-level students is considered or allowed, and the confidentiality of student preferences is maintained throughout the process. The goals of this process are (1) to ensure that no student is unhappy or disappointed with their assignment and (2) to ensure that as many student preferences are granted as possible, without severely compromising the happiness of any single student. That is, everyone gets a little of what they want, but no one gets everything.

Due to the incredibly varied size, shape, and physical features of Simmons rooms, we believe an algorithmic approach to room assignments is inappropriate for Simmons Hall. No two rooms are identical, and Simmons benefits from a human approach to room placement, catered to each students' individual requests. We use a computer program only to pre-process and validate responses and to speed up simple tasks such as linking the responses of students who request each other as roommates. In our experience, due to the short timeframe, some students can get unintentionally overlooked due to a human-only approach and as a result, we are seeking ways to make the process as fair as possible.

### **First Year Rooming Process Outline (2026)**

In Simmons, first-year students are matched with appropriate roommates and placed in rooms based on a holistic overview of their responses to a thorough room and roommate preference form. This matching process occurs in two phases: once over the summer and once at the end of orientation week.

1. **Over the summer**, the Room Assignment Chairs (RACs) review student responses to the general housing questionnaire and carefully match students with compatible roommates. This matching is done manually by the RACs, without an algorithm, and is based on a combination of student interests, living habits, and qualities that students have listed as desirable in a roommate. Once grouped into singles, doubles, and triples, students are assigned to rooms in the building. Because the social atmosphere of Simmons is very fluid and halls are not unified by a single identity or culture, the room assignment process over the summer is fairly random.<sup>1</sup>
2. **After arriving on campus and beginning orientation**, students will participate in a scheduled “rooming night” in Simmons.
  - a. Students will first gather in the building's multi-purpose room (MPR) for a **detailed presentation on the rooming process**. During the presentation, the RACs will explain to students how best to convey their desires through the form and how form responses will be interpreted, so that students are well-equipped to express their needs.
  - b. Following the presentation, students will first **explore the building**, where they will meet upper-level students, GRAs, and discover the weird variety of physical features available in Simmons rooms.
  - c. They will then have the option to attend a "mixer" to meet potential roommates and gauge compatibility.<sup>2</sup>
  - d. Students will then report to the dining hall, where they will fill out a thorough room preference form listing all of their room- and roommate-related preferences.
    - i. These preferences include requested roommates,<sup>3</sup> living habits, desired room features (i.e. curvy walls, internal/external bathrooms, windows, etc.), desired room location, and proximity to friends.
    - ii. On this form, students will also have the option to indicate that they prefer to remain in their temporary assignment. This option is explained in more detail below.
    - iii. Because students will fill out the form in person, RACs will be available to answer any questions that arise. Students will assign

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<sup>1</sup> **Assignments given over the summer are intended to be temporary.** Most students in the building will relocate during phase 2 of the assignment process (after orientation week). Consequently, students will be advised to pack a small bag with a week's worth of living supplies and will be encouraged not to unpack the rest of their belongings until after phase 2 permanent assignments are given. This will be explained in the welcome letter, on a flyer given to students at check in, and at the presentation by the RACs. Students who wish to remain in their summer assignment should refer to the section titled “Opting Out of the Simmons Relocation Process”

<sup>2</sup> As explained above, students who do not find a roommate during this time will be carefully matched based on their responses to the form.

<sup>3</sup> Only mutual roommate requests will be considered.

“points” to each of several preference categories, weighting them in order of importance. Students will have a finite number of points to distribute and are encouraged to distribute points in a way that indicates which rooming factors are truly a priority and which are less important to them.

Once all forms have been submitted, the RACs will meet with the Assistant Director/Area Director and select other volunteer student residents. This small committee will first match students with roommates, taking into account students’ mutually requested roommates and their living habits. Once all roommate sets have been grouped, the committee will begin placing students in the building. Room assignments in this phase are very deliberate. Students are assigned to a room manually by the RAC committee, without an algorithm, based on a holistic consideration of students’ point-weighted form preferences. Only student form responses are considered; no input from other upper-level students is solicited or allowed.

All student concerns and complaints should be taken directly to the RACs and the Assistant Director/Area Director. The RACs, in consultation with the House Team, are ultimately responsible for the final decisions of the rooming committee. Other Simmons students serving on the committee are not responsible for fielding questions or concerns about housing assignments.

## Opting Out of the Simmons Relocation Process

Students who would like to opt out of the relocation process (ie: stay in their summer assigned room) must indicate on their rooming survey\* completed on in-house rooming night that they do not want to relocate.<sup>4</sup>

Students may also contact the RACs or Assistant Director/Area Director to voice concerns about moving. The RACs/AD will be able to answer any questions and calm any concerns you have about the process. **Please note that if you contact the RACs/AD and do not indicate you want to stay in your summer assigned room on your rooming survey, the RAC committee will assume you have decided to opt in to relocate.**

**Students should be aware of potential issues in which a student cannot maintain their summer assignment room.** In the event that a student must be relocated, the RACs will document why that decision was made. Students may approach the RACs and Assistant Director/Area Director if they feel they were unfairly moved and their request was ignored.

- Students whose summer assignment meet ADA qualifications must recognize that **by law, you will need to move should a student with an ADA accommodation**

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<sup>4</sup> The rooming survey is required regardless of if you want to relocate or stay in your room.

**need it.** If you request opting out of the relocation process, but your room is required to meet an ADA accommodation, please know that per your housing contract, you will be and are required to move to a new assignment.

- If a student in a multiple-occupancy room opts out of reassignment, then barring extraordinary circumstances (such as their room being needed by a student with an ADA accommodation), they will be assigned to that room. If multiple students initially assigned to the same room opt out of the process but indicate that they do not want to be roommates, their opt-out will override their desire to have different roommates (including any roommate requests). Students can avoid such situations by discussing their desire to relocate/not relocate with their initial roommates as early as possible.

To summarize:

- Students may opt out of the relocation process up until completion of the rooming survey completed on in-house rooming night.
- Students who are given an assignment in an ADA accommodating room are not guaranteed to keep their room (per ADA law).
- Since opt-outs are prioritized, initial roommates who do not want to live together but opt not to move to new rooms will remain roommates.

Any questions about the opt out process can be directed to the RACs or Assistant Director/Area Director.

## The First Year Rooming Committee

The First Year Rooming Committee, responsible for final assignments at the end of in-house exploration, consists of the RACs, the Assistant Director/Area Director, volunteer student residents, and optionally other members of the Simmons student government. This committee is responsible for the execution of the assignment process outlined above. All committee members participate in roommate pairing and room placement. The special roles of each committee member are defined below (but may vary slightly year to year, as the committee deems appropriate).

Every member of the committee is encouraged to freely voice any concerns during the assignment process.

### RACs

- Give an overview presentation to first-year students and serve as the point of contact for all questions and concerns leading up to in-house exploration.
- Administer the room preference form and explain to students how best to express their desires through the room preference form to maximize their return.

- Ensure that the committee is adhering to Simmons rooming values.
- Oversee the assignment process. Be the final authority on all assignment decisions.
- Maintain a schedule, ensure everyone is on track with the assignment deadline, and define a group workflow.
- Delegate tasks and oversee their completion.
- Be the point of contact for all student questions, concerns, and complaints. Students should take their concerns directly to the RACs and/or Assistant Director/Area Director, NOT to other members of the rooming committee.

## House Government Members / Student Volunteers

- Attest to the general characteristics of specific locations in the building. Help determine which sections are likely to be loud or quiet, lively or low-key, etc. Since all upper-level students shuffle around the building, the general atmosphere of a section can vary year to year.
- Document decisions as they are made (paperclip roommate groups together, keep track of how many wishes a given student has been granted, take note of which students are relocating and those whose requests not to relocate have been granted, etc.).
- Assist the RACs by completing tasks delegated to them during the process of making assignments.

## Area Director

- During in-house exploration, help the RACs to address student questions and to enforce the house rooming policy.
- Ensure that the committee is adhering to Institute and DSL values and rules.
- Remind the RACs of special arrangements made with individual students prior to in-house exploration. Ensure that those students receive what they were promised.
- Help guide the group through tough decision-making.
- Once assignments are released, help RACs communicate with students who are initially upset/frustrated with their assignment.

## Other House Team Members

The Heads of House are not involved in the minutiae of the rooming process but are available to handle complaints and concerns that arise before, during, and after the rooming process.

The GRAs of Simmons take point in explaining their section of Simmons to the first-year students during the exploration period. GRAs explain the section, provide light snacks, and answer questions about living in Simmons.

# Upper-Level Student Rooming Process

The processes described above are specific to first semester students.

Once permanent assignments are completed, a small number of students (across all class years) will email the RACs throughout the academic year requesting a rooming switch.

Switches are made at the discretion of the RACs, provided the student has a compelling reason and there is available space in the building to accommodate the request. RACs often consult the Heads of House, GRAs, and/or Assistant Director/Area Director if circumstances are difficult.

Between fall and spring semesters, RACs ask incoming students from other dorms to list their preferences and manually assign students to rooms that meet these requests, if possible. The number of students transferring in/out is usually less than 10, so this individualized process works well. In the event that turnover between semesters is very large, the RACs have the ability under Simmons house policy to hold a small in-house lottery, at their discretion, for all students moving in/switching rooms between semesters. This has not occurred in the past 7 years.

In April, all rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors returning to Simmons self-select rooms in an order determined by a lottery process. Picking order is determined by class year and randomly generated within each class year as follows\*\*\*:

1. Rising Seniors, 9th, and 10th term students
2. Rising Juniors
3. Rising Sophomores

Students simply select any available room with their desired roommate (if any) during their assigned selection turn. The RACs administer the lottery and enforce all bylaws surrounding the process but do not match roommates or assign returning students to specific rooms. Students who wish to keep their current room through the next academic year and are beginning at least their third year may do so and must follow instructions to notify RACs of this intention before room selection day.

## Process Feedback, Evaluation, and Documentation

During the rooming process, RACs will document their decision-making process so that they have written responses prepared for inquiries about room/roommate assignments. RACs will also document how closely the permanent rooms matched with student room preferences, including keeping track of how many students' wishes to keep their temporary assignments were fulfilled.

For the future, surveys will be created that ask students to reflect on the rooming process a week after, a month after, and at the end of the school year to gauge how well the room assignment process worked. It is important to survey at different points in the year to tackle honeymoon bias or stress during the first month of classes. It will also be helpful to monitor overall roommate longevity.