



PHOTO, 4B
Where we study

Students blindsided by housing changes Dean of Students responds to concerns via email update



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE

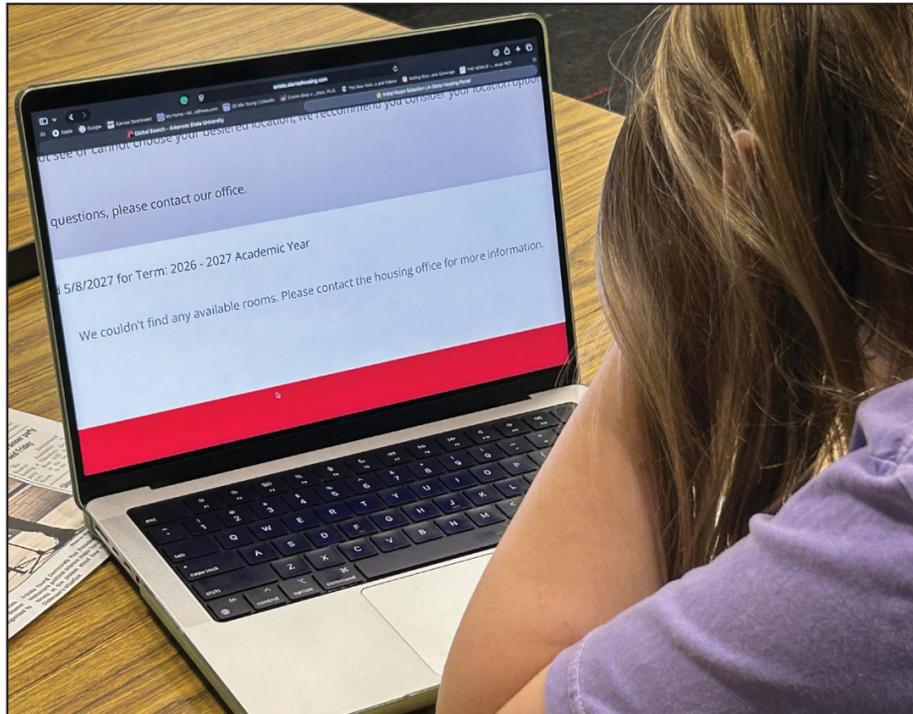


Photo illustration by Jerry Don Burton | Editor-in-Chief



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE

(Center) A student sits in disarray after failing to find a housing assignment to complete their Fall 2026 housing application. Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Todd Clark said just under 600 students were on the housing waitlist Friday afternoon. These availability issues come after the North Park Quads and University Hall residence halls were reserved for incoming first-year students.

ELLA DOBSON

STAFF WRITER

The Spring 2026 housing process has been a hot topic for students and parents alike. The selection process was unique in terms of time slots and unannounced limitations.

When housing applications for Fall 2026 opened on Monday, Feb. 23, students logged in to the housing portal to choose their housing assignment. However, many were met with a notification stating zero availability and an email offer to join the waitlist.

Ashlyn Higgins, a sophomore elementary education major from Jonesboro, said she was thankful to have secured housing off-campus next year.

"I feel horrible for the students and my friends who are going through the stress of the housing situation. It has honestly made me stressed out for them," Higgins said.

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Todd Clark said, as of Friday afternoon, just under 600 students are on the waitlist.

"What we're seeing at A-State is because we've had unprecedented growth and five straight semesters of record headcounts on campus," Clark said. "These are new challenges to us, but they are everyday realities to growing in major universities, and so it just takes a little bit of a change of mindset."

Unexpected changes

A change for students was the unavailability of the North Park Quads, University Hall, and Kays Hall, which are now reserved for incoming first-year students. While University Hall and Kays Hall have always been first-year dorms, the

Quads have consistently housed sophomores and upperclassmen.

Additionally, students who lived in campus apartments this year were given the chance to reclaim their rooms before normal selections opened, a process A-State has used before. Many of those rooms were simply reclaimed by upperclassmen, further limiting the options students had.

These factors, combined with the controversial decision to let students with fewer hours choose first, created a situation of anxiety and confusion among parents and students.

Tara Gerrish, mother of A-State student Tess Brooks, said she's disappointed with the lack of housing and communication from the university.

"My daughter is an out-of-state student. Her home state is Illinois, seven hours away. We can't afford to wait too long for a bed to open up," Gerrish said. "I feel we may be forced to find another school, and she needs to start applying for scholarships."

When Brooks signed in to claim housing on Monday morning, she said she was given no available rooms and asked to join the waitlist, one with 200 already on it, and was given a list of off-campus housing options.

"She (Brooks) said her 10 a.m. class turned into a housing discussion as it seemed everyone in the class was in the same boat as her," Gerrish said.

Implications

Roughly 9,000 students take classes on the Jonesboro campus each year. However, the university only has a housing capacity of around 3,400 beds.

The number of reserved beds is calculated using application numbers, new student orientation registration, housing deposits and accepted

housing scholarships.

The number of incoming first-year students has steadily grown in the last three years. According to the 2024-25 A-State Factbook, the total number of first-time first-year students was 1,608 in 2023 and 1,955 in 2024.

The class of 2029 saw 2,222 new students overall, a 12% increase from the year before. Fall enrollment is expected to rise even more.

Clark said the university's priority has always been incoming first-year students, rising sophomores, and any student with a housing scholarship. Studies have shown that living on campus is most impactful for younger students, giving them access to academic and social resources.

He said the housing department is taking the waitlist student-by-student and working to get every student settled in ample time for the fall semester.

"I would tell students and their parents, for the time being, don't panic. Just because you're on a waitlist does not mean that you won't have a bed available, and to be patient, let this situation play out," Clark said. "Our housing team is working down the waitlist every day, and more students get moved over to confirmed housing."

Administration's response

On Tuesday, March 3, Dean of Students Martha Spack released a statement to update the A-State community on the housing situation. Her statement confirmed that the university must prioritize housing for incoming first-year students and rising sophomores.

"This is common practice at major universities across the country and is supported by research consistently showing

that living on campus during the first two years leads to higher retention, stronger academic performance, and deeper involvement in campus life," Spack's statement read. "This strategy is grounded in the goal of maximizing student success at A-State."

This release also answered the question of A-State's plans for students with housing financial aid who cannot find suitable on-campus housing.

"If your current scholarship includes funding for housing and you are unable to be offered an on-campus space by the end of the spring 2026 semester, those funds will be paid out in the fall to support off-campus living arrangements," the statement read. "A-State is committed to honoring the financial aid commitments that were made to you."

Spack and Clark said, in the search for more housing options, the university has begun talks with Jonesboro apartment complexes and residential facilities about priority access or potential discounts for A-State students.

Additionally, around 30 A-State faculty members live in campus housing, provided there is a surplus of beds available for students. Clark confirmed that these employees have been notified of the housing situation and asked to search for living spaces elsewhere.

Higgins said she was frustrated with the lack of communication from the university.

"A-State should have communicated better that the housing selections would be different this upcoming semester. They could have sent an email in advance explaining the situation, especially the waitlist,"

Higgins said. "We deserve way better for what we are paying."

Increased off-campus living might raise a concern around parking, as many feel there are already not enough spots for commuters. Clark said the university is keeping an eye on the situation.

"We will continue to monitor the parking situation on campus. I can say that we do not have a parking crisis on campus. There are plenty of parking spots available on this campus at any given time," Clark said.

Another potential change on the horizon is the renovations of Kays Hall, confirmed by the December 2025 Board of Trustees meeting. The university is currently in talks with contractors to confirm the timeline and depth of the renovations and is hopeful to announce those soon.

University Housing declined to provide a statement in time for publication and deferred to Todd Clark.

For more information, contact University Housing at housing@astate.edu or call 870-972-2042.



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE

Dean of Students Martha Spack. She sent an announcement regarding housing concerns to students Tuesday morning.

Midterm election results

Editors: Note: Results are as of 2 a.m. on March 4

U.S. Senate Democratic:

- Hallie Schoffner: 88% (2564)
- Ethan Dunbar: 12% (348)

U.S. Senate Republican:

- Tom Cotton: 83.3% (5887)
- Jeb Little: 8.5% (601)
- Micah Ashby: 8.2% (579)

Governor Democratic:

- Fred Love: 77.6% (2222)
- Supha Xayprasith-Mays: 22.4% (640)

Secretary of State Republican:

- Bryan Norris 38.6% (2550)
- Sen. Kim Hammer: 35% (2309)
- Cathy Hardin Harrison: 26.5% (1751)

Create@State abstract deadline extended

The Create@State student abstract deadline has been extended to Friday, March 13. Create@State is a celebration of research and creativity featuring posters, performances and showcases of student work. Scan the QR code below to submit entries.



BRIEFS COURTESY OF A-STATE DAILY DIGEST

THIS WEEK IN THE HERALD:

OPINION, 2A

- You should be more angry about the Epstein files
- "No New wars?" More like, "No, new wars!"

NEWS, 3A

- Campus enjoys grilled cheese and soup fundraiser
- Campus Crime

LIFE, 4A

- Student speaks
- What to do if you see ICE on campus

ARTS & E, 1B

- 9 to 5 was so good, you could lose your mind
- Matthew Lillard slays in "Scream 7"

SPORTS, 2B

- A-State tops Cajuns in season finale
- Red Wolves cruise to a 87-53 Senior Night win
- Tanking hides a bigger issue in the NBA
- Eric Fluke's SBC B-Ball Tournament Predictions