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UNO Student Housing Survey

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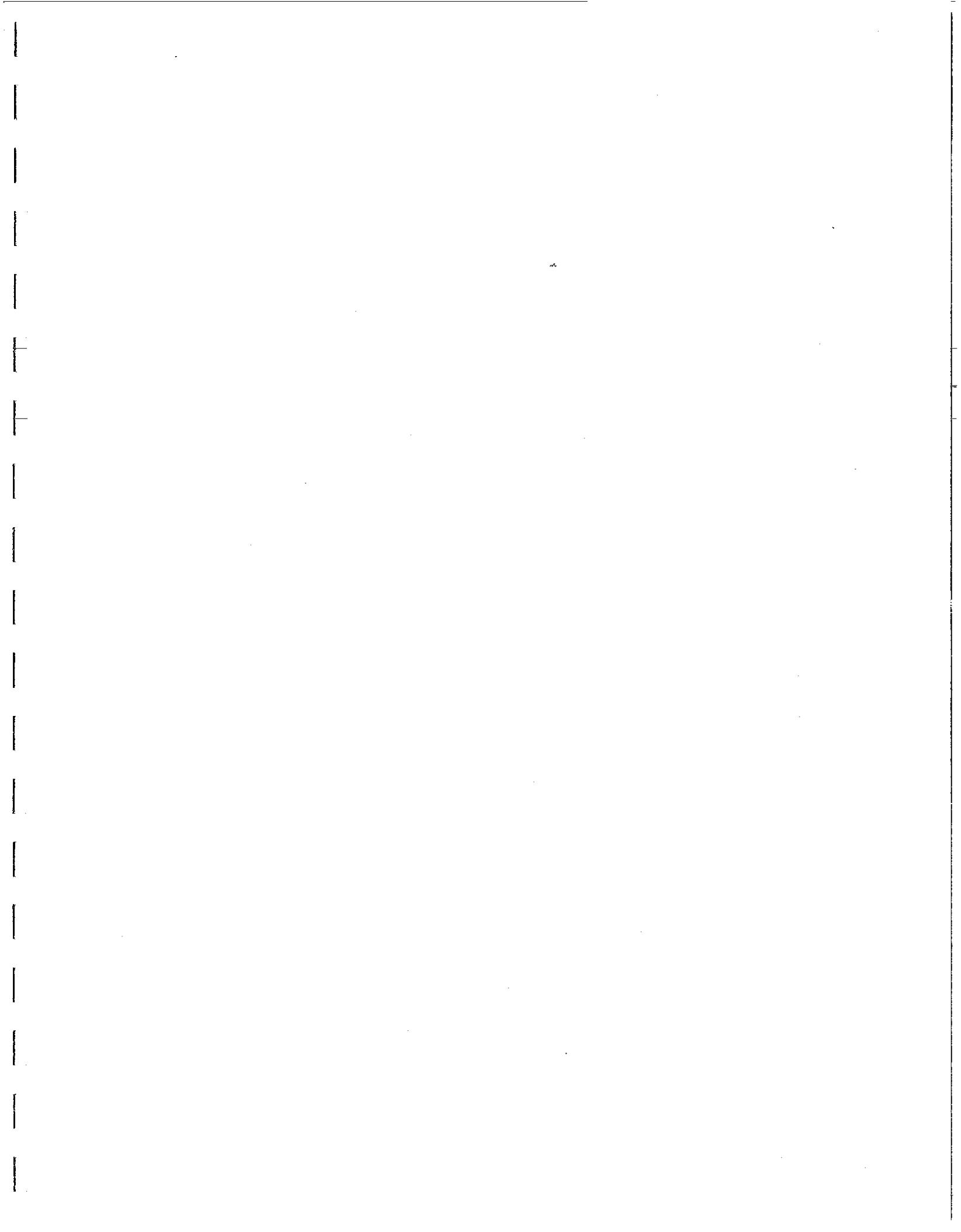
Student Housing Survey

Commissioned by
UNO Educational and Student Services Office

Prepared by
Center for Public Affairs Research
College for Public Affairs and Community Service
University of Nebraska at Omaha

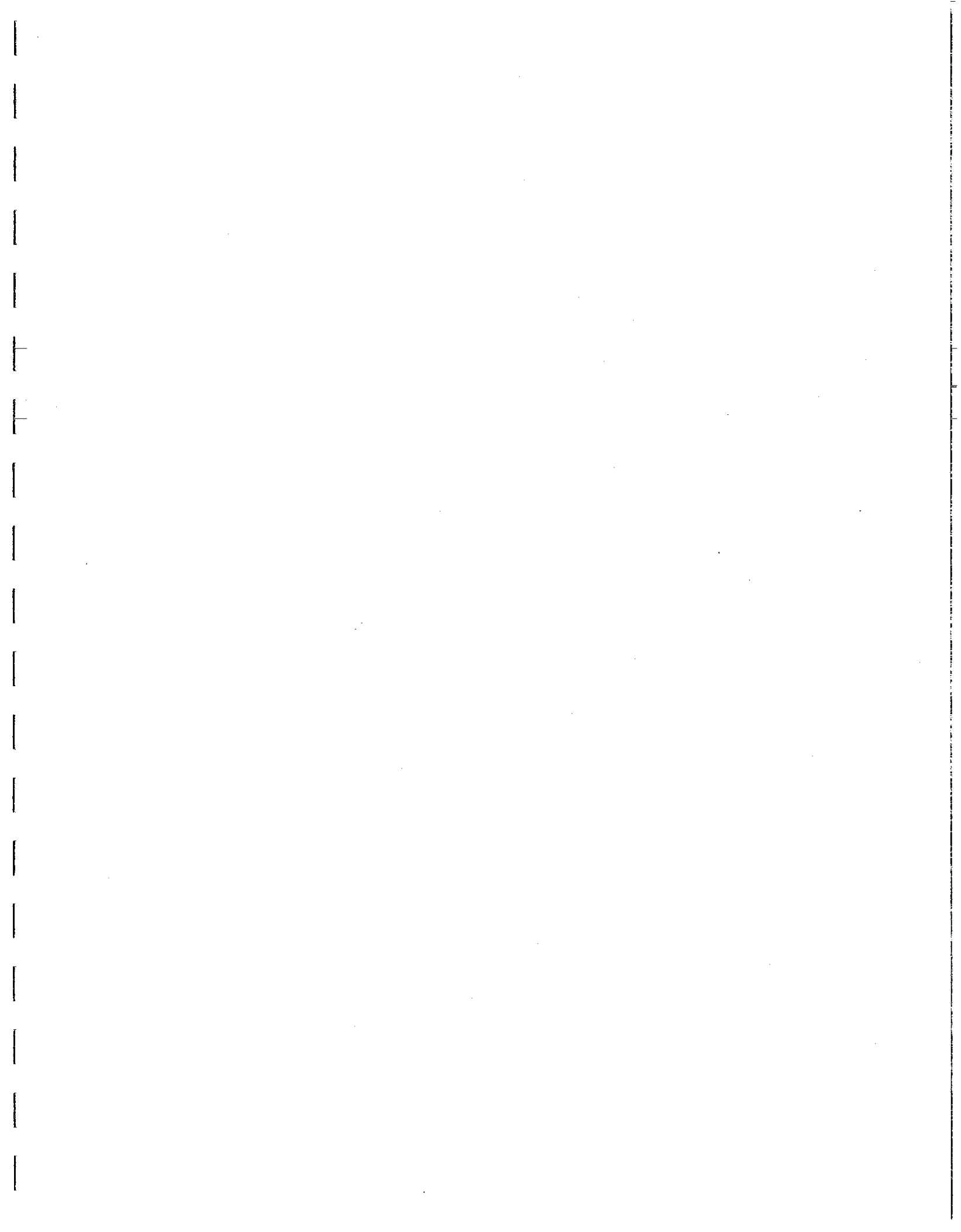


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UNO Student Housing Survey

Introduction

For many years the University of Nebraska at Omaha has been considered the urban campus in the University of Nebraska system. Part of its mission was to meet the educational, research and service needs of the Omaha metropolitan area. UNO was able to meet this urban mission as a commuter campus since most of the students were already living in Omaha.

In recent years the educational mission of UNO has evolved and broadened. Also the nature of the student population has changed. There appears to be a trend of more incoming freshmen coming to UNO from outside the four-county metropolitan area (Douglas, Sarpy and Washington County, Nebraska and Pottawattamie County, Iowa). The UNO Class Profile Report for the 1984 Fall Semester, which is based on American College Testing Corporation (ACT) data, showed that 11 percent of the freshman class came from Nebraska high schools outside the four-county metropolitan area or were from out-of-state high schools. In 1988 the figure was 12 percent and in 1989 the figure was 15 percent.

UNO has modified its programs and services to meet the needs of a changing student population. This willingness to change is one reason that enrollment has continued to grow on the Omaha campus. The provision of campus housing is one of the areas where UNO can broaden its services to a changing student population base.

Purpose

Commissioned by UNO's Educational and Student Services Office, the Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR) conducted a survey of student housing. The purpose of this survey was to determine the level of interest in campus housing among current students of the University of Nebraska at Omaha aged 17 to 24. The survey followed a market research approach; as such, a sample of UNO students were asked a series of questions regarding housing preferences and needs.

Information from the survey will help University administrators and campus planners in assessing the likely demand for student housing. In addition, the survey collected data on housing unit features desired by the students which will be helpful to potential developers.

Methodology

As with any market study, the purpose of this survey was to learn about the preferences of potential customers—in this case the customers were the expected residents of UNO student housing. The market research method used was a telephone interview. The survey instrument was constructed by CPAR in consultation with campus administrators.

The target group of this market survey was those UNO students who were thought to most likely use university housing—full-time students aged 17 to 24. University records from the Spring term 1990 were used to develop lists for interviewing. Only students who had Omaha area telephone numbers were included. Altogether there were 4,120 students in this target group.

Within the primary UNO student target group, two subsets of populations were identified for study. The first subset consisted of students who had apartment numbers included in their addresses. Since these students lived in an apartment it was assumed they were not currently living at home, and that this group of students would be most likely to have an interest in university housing.

The number of full-time UNO students aged 17 to 24 who lived in apartments totaled 440. Since this is a small number of students and telephone surveyors say this age group is typically difficult to contact for interviewing, all students in this group were included in the list for possible telephone contact. Calls were placed to every third name until a sufficient number of interviews were completed. Altogether, interviews were conducted with 155 students, more than one-third of the subset total.

The second subset of the student target population included those who did not have apartment numbers included in their addresses. Most likely these students are living at home with relatives. The total number of students in this subset of the target population was 3,680. A random sample of 600 students was drawn. As with the apartment dwellers, every third name on the list was called until the quota of 154 interviews had been reached.

In total, 309 students were interviewed by telephone in late April 1990 by Midwest Survey, Inc. Survey questionnaires were then tabulated, frequencies computed for each response and results analyzed by the Center for Public Affairs Research.

Data Analysis

This report profiles the attitudes and preferences of current UNO students aged 17-24 regarding university housing. The following student housing areas were addressed by the survey:

- Current level of interest
- Past level of interest
- Reasons for interest or lack of interest
- Preferred geographic location of units
- Styles of student housing
- Preferred living arrangements
- Acceptable cost ranges
- Importance of various housing features and benefits

In addition, the characteristics of UNO students interested in campus housing is described. Finally, the survey results are used to provide an estimate of the demand for campus housing among full-time UNO students aged 17 to 24.

Because the survey focused on two groups of 17-24 year-old full-time students -- those living in apartments and those living at home -- results are generated separately for each group. In addition, results are provided for all of the students interviewed for the housing market survey.

Since this survey used a stratified sampling approach with unequal sampling proportions for the two student population subsets, or strata, it was necessary to develop weights for the

two subsets in order to estimate averages for the total UNO full-time students aged 17 to 24 registered for the Spring 1990 semester. At the 95 percent confidence level the maximum error is plus or minus 6 percent. The reader should thus keep in mind tables that include total percentages are weighted to reflect the differences in the two subsets.

Survey Findings

For reporting purposes, the survey findings are grouped into four major categories — level of interest in campus housing, preferred location of residential units, importance of specific housing features, and characteristics of those student interested in housing. Following are descriptions of the findings of the survey.

Level of Interest in Student Housing

Since UNO does not currently have student housing, students do not now have the option to live on campus and often make alternative plans. Interviewed students were therefore given the opportunity to indicate whether or not they were currently interested in campus housing, or would have been earlier. They were asked: "If student housing were available at UNO would you consider living in it?" If students responded that they were not interested, they were then asked: "Looking back, would you have been interested in student housing when you first enrolled at UNO?"

Table 1 describes the level of interest in campus housing. More than 43 percent of those students who had apartment addresses said they were interested now; another 32.9 percent said they would have been earlier. Over 53 percent of those students who had other addresses said they were interested now, and an additional 16.9 percent said they would have been. At the beginning of this study, apartment dwellers were expected to be most interested in student housing, yet that is not the case. Why the difference in findings? While we can't be certain, it is possible that students living in apartments have made living arrangements and are less interested in campus housing.

Respondents were given the chance to say why they were not interested in student housing. The most common reason for not being interested is preferring to live at home, followed by preferring current housing arrangement and marriage.

When the responses from these two groups are combined, it is estimated that 52.2 percent of the 17 to 24 year-old full-time UNO students are now interested in campus housing. Another

Table 1 - Interest in Student Housing

	Interested Now	Not Interested Now But Would Have Been At Enrollment	Not Ever Interested	Not Sure	Total*
	-Percent-				
Students with:					
Apartment addresses	43.5	32.9	19.5	3.9	99.8
Other addresses	53.2	16.9	28.6	1.3	100.0
Weighted total**	52.2	18.6	28.2	1.6	100.6

*Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

**Percentages for this group have been weighted to reflect the relative proportions of apartment and non-apartment dwellers among all 17-24 year-old full-time UNO students.

18.6 percent would have been interested if housing would have been available when they first enrolled at UNO.

These figures indicate a solid base of interest in student housing at UNO and are generally consistent with the UNO (ACT) Class Profile for the 1989-1990 year. Approximately 34 percent of that year's incoming freshman class to UNO said that they plan to live in a college residence halls. They indicated their plans while taking the ACT exam during their senior year in high school.

Location of Student Housing

Table 2 contains information regarding the preferred location of student housing. Only those students who responded that they were interested now in university housing were asked

Table 2 - Housing Preferences of Students Interested in Housing

Residence Characteristics	(Percentage of Students Expressing Preference)		
	Students With:		
	Apartment Addresses	Other Addresses	Weighted Total*
Location:			
On campus	35.1	28.6	29.2
Adjacent to campus	25.7	14.3	15.4
One half mile away	9.5	25.0	23.5
Doesn't matter	29.7	32.1	31.9
Total**	100.0	100.0	100.0
Type of Residence:			
Residence hall	16.9	18.7	18.5
Apartment	58.1	49.5	50.6
Suite	25.0	31.8	31.0
Total**	100.0	100.0	100.1
Acceptable Cost:			
less than \$150	5.0	6.3	7.0
\$150-\$199	12.5	20.8	20.4
\$200-\$249	29.1	24.0	26.4
\$250-\$299	26.7	16.7	17.3
\$300-\$349	19.2	27.0	23.1
\$350 or more	7.5	5.2	5.9
Total**	100.0	100.0	100.1
Living Arrangement:			
No roommate	23.0	12.0	13.4
One roommate	70.6	76.9	76.1
Two or more roommates	6.3	11.1	10.5
Total**	99.9	100.0	100.0
Characteristics:			
Furnished	48.8	52.3	51.9
Kitchens	77.0	75.9	76.1

*Percentages for this group have been weighted to reflect the relative proportions of apartment and non-apartment dwellers among all 17-24 year-old full-time UNO students.

**Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

their preferred student housing location. Students with apartment addresses were stronger in their preference that university housing be located on or adjacent to campus than those with other addresses (60.8 percent and 42.9 percent, respectively). When these numbers are weighted for the total targeted student population, it is estimated that 44.6 percent of those interested in student housing want housing on or adjacent to campus.

There is, however, a significant proportion of the interested students who indicate no preference on the location of campus housing. Even though this apparent non-preference for location amounts to about 30 percent of both student population subsets and the weighted average, there is evidence to suggest that the student want to live close to campus.

For example, nearly 60 percent of those interested in housing said that walking distance to campus was a very important benefit of student housing (see table 3). Furthermore, more than 60 percent said that access to UNO facilities and services was a very important benefit (see table 3).

Preferences in Student Housing Features

Both table 2 and table 3 contain detailed information on the housing preferences of students interested in university housing. The students were asked to indicate their preference for specific design options, to rate optional housing features, and to rank the importance of various benefits. This information can be especially useful to the planners of housing units.

As can be seen in table 2, it is clear that students do not prefer the traditional residence hall or dormitory style of campus housing. The opposition is equally strong among those

Table 3 - Ratings of Housing Features and Benefits Among All Students* (Percentage of Students Rating)

	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Total**
Features:				
Quiet study areas	61.3	34.2	4.4	99.9
Laundry facilities	55.7	39.4	4.9	100.0
Off street parking	52.3	41.7	6.0	100.0
Personal computer access	40.9	43.8	15.3	100.0
Indoor exercise facilities	28.2	46.5	25.4	100.1
Outdoor recreation areas	26.8	56.3	16.9	100.0
Student lounges	26.5	63.6	9.9	100.0
Cable television	17.1	32.4	50.5	100.0
Vending machines	9.9	46.6	43.4	99.9
Meeting rooms	8.3	45.9	45.8	100.0
Benefits:				
Security	66.2	30.3	3.5	100.0
Access to UNO facilities and services	60.6	39.3	0.0	99.9
Low cost	59.2	38.4	2.4	100.0
Walking distance to campus	58.5	31.9	9.5	99.9
Independence	55.7	42.2	2.1	100.0
Traditional experience	44.9	42.0	13.2	100.1
Personal growth/development	35.4	57.7	6.9	100.0
Access to tutors	21.6	51.3	27.2	100.1

*Percentages for this group have been weighted to reflect the relative proportions of apartment and non-apartment dwellers among all 17-24 year-old full-time UNO students.

**Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

students who have apartment addresses and those who have other addresses. When the total percentages are weighted, it is estimated that more than 80 percent of full-time UNO students aged 17 to 24 preferred either an apartment or suite style of campus housing.

The relatively low cost of university housing is important. There was almost unanimous agreement among the students that low cost was either a very important or important benefit of student housing (see table 3). When asked to give an acceptable figure for the monthly cost of housing, the students responded with a moderate, yet acceptable range (see table 2). A cost range of \$200 to \$300 per month was acceptable to nearly the majority (43.7 percent). However, 30 percent were willing to pay more than \$300 a month. (While the specifics of the monthly rent was not discussed, most were willing to consider purchasing a UNO meal plan.)

Regarding living arrangements, more than 75 percent of the weighted total said that one roommate was acceptable (see table 2). The roommate arrangement is consistent with conventional thinking. And not surprisingly, more than half of the students would like the housing units furnished. However, more than three-fourths of the students would like kitchen facilities, a departure from traditional student housing plans.

The survey revealed some features and benefits that are particularly important to the students. In the area of education, table 3 shows that quiet study areas and access to personal computers were rated as very important features of student housing. Also rated as very important in the area of living conveniences were off-street parking and laundry facilities.

Two other benefits of student housing are noteworthy. They pertain to more personal issues. The opportunity to gain independence was rated a very important benefit by a majority of the students. And the security of campus housing was also ranked as very important by a large majority of those interviewed.

Characteristics of Students Interested in Housing

Table 4 presents selected background information for two groups of students — those who are interested in housing now and those who would have been if housing were available when they first enrolled.

More than 80 percent of those students now interested in university housing currently live with their parents or with other relatives. Most reside in single family structures. Almost three-fourths list Omaha as their hometown. This shows that students who live with their parents would still consider living on campus, even if their parents live in town. While not a necessity, university housing seems to be something this group would like.

Of those who would have been interested in student housing, more than 60 percent live with parents or other relatives. However, almost 40 percent live alone or with others (including spouse). Most (70.8 percent) live in single-family structures but less than those now interested. While the majority list Omaha as their hometown, almost one-third of these students come from outside the metropolitan area. This observation is consistent with the assumption that this group was able to make alternative living arrangements while attending UNO. This group needs to find housing to attend school.

Travel time to UNO does not seem to be a factor in current or past interest in campus housing. Only a small percentage of either student group now takes more than 30 minutes to get to the University. Those interested now, though, do take a little longer to get to classes. Generally, students who live outside the metropolitan area, the long distance commuters, do not make up a large portion of those who have an interest in housing.

Table 4 - Characteristics of Students Interested in Housing*

	Interested Now Percent	Would Have Been Interested Percent
Current Housing Situation:		
With parents	75.7	58.3
With other relative	4.8	3.7
With spouse	3.1	17.7
Alone or with others	15.4	20.4
Other	1.1	0.0
Current Type of Residence:		
Single family house	84.3	70.8
Multi-family structure	15.4	28.8
Other	0.3	0.4
Travel Time to UNO:		
Less than 15 minutes	34.2	37.9
15-30 minutes	53.2	54.5
30 minutes or longer	12.7	7.6
Personal Status:		
Single	96.9	82.3
Married	3.1	17.7
Employed full-time	19.2	18.2
Employed part-time	80.8	81.8
Hometown:		
Omaha	73.1	69.6
Lincoln	0.0	3.2
Other Nebraska city/town	12.5	11.0
Iowa city/town	8.3	9.1
Other	6.0	7.0

*Percentages have been weighted to reflect the relative proportions of apartment and non-apartment dwellers among all 17-24 year-old full-time students.

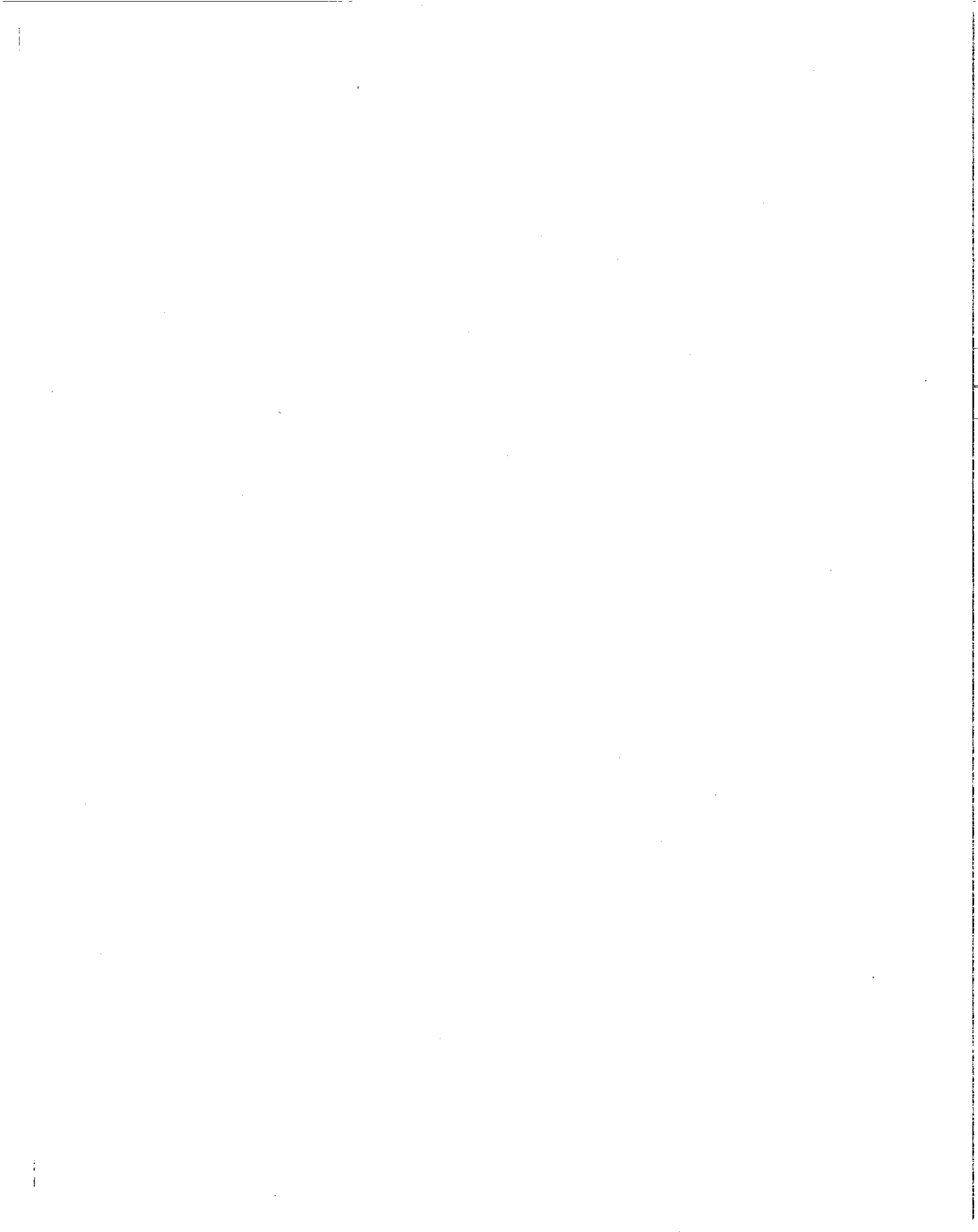
The interest of married students in campus housing is mixed. The data show that few of those students currently interested in university housing are married. However, almost 20 percent of those who would have been interested in housing are now married. More research is needed in measuring the potential interest by married students. Because of the nature of UNO's student population this additional research may be especially useful.

As expected, most of the interested students work part time. It should be noted though that almost one-fifth of the students now interested in housing, or would have been interested, work full time. This finding is consistent with their concern for the cost of housing because many are paying for their own education.

Housing Demand

While the primary purpose of the survey was to determine the level of interest in university housing by a selected group of UNO students, it is possible to estimate housing demand. Based on information for the two subsets of this survey, it is estimated that the number of students now interested in UNO campus housing is at least 2,151 students, based on 52.2 percent of the weighted sample responding yes (.522 x 4,120). A 95 percent confidence interval around this point estimate is between 1,917 and 2,385.

Appendix



2. If you were to consider student housing, would you prefer that it be located?

- (1) On campus. (Go to Question 5)
- (2) Adjacent to campus. (Go to Question 5)
- (3) Within one fourth mile of campus. (Go to Question 5)
- (4) Doesn't make any difference. (Go to Question 5)

3. Looking back, would you have been interested in student housing when you first enrolled at UNO?

- (1) No. (Go to Question 4)
- (2) Yes. (Go to Question 5)

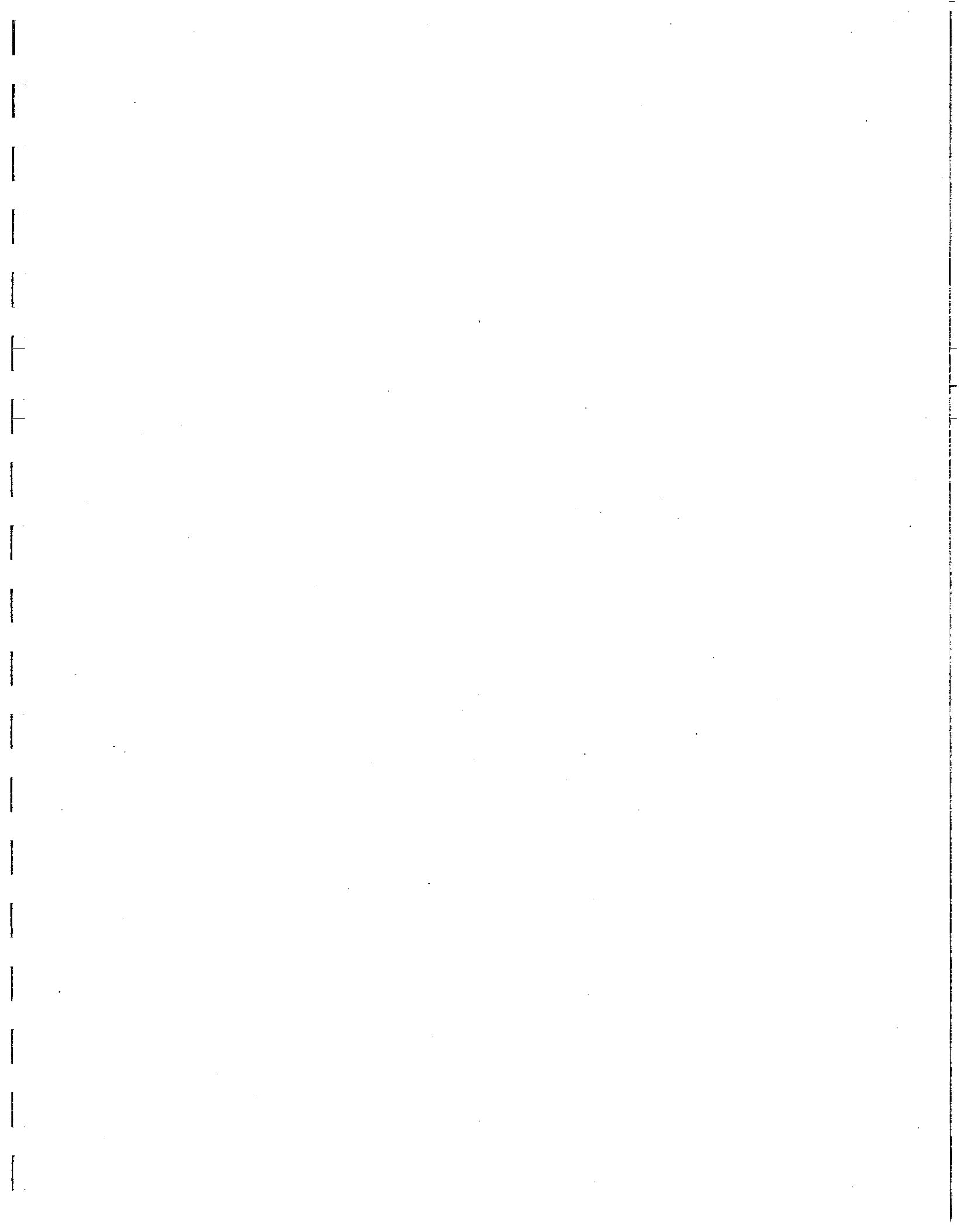
4. Why would you not have considered student housing? [Don't read list; listen to reasons and check all that apply.]

- Prefer to live at home.
 - Too expensive.
 - Don't like student food service.
 - Too many restrictions.
 - No privacy.
 - Difficult to study.
 - Rooms are too small.
 - There are no advantages.
 - Not convenient.
 - Prefer my current arrangement.
 - Other _____
- _____

Go to STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS (Page 5)

5. What type of student housing would you prefer?

- (1) Residence hall (1 large bath per floor).
- (2) Apartment (1 bath per unit).
- (3) Suite (1 bath per 2 or 3 rooms).
- (4) Other _____



6. What cost range is most acceptable to you for... [Ask the type of housing preferred in Question 5]

___	Residence hall	\$	___	___	___	___
___	Apartment	\$	___	___	___	___
___	Suite	\$	___	___	___	___
___	Other _____	\$	___	___	___	___

7. What type of living arrangement would you prefer?

___ (1) No roommates.
___ (2) 1 roommates.
___ (2) 2 or more roommates.

8. Would you prefer they have kitchens?

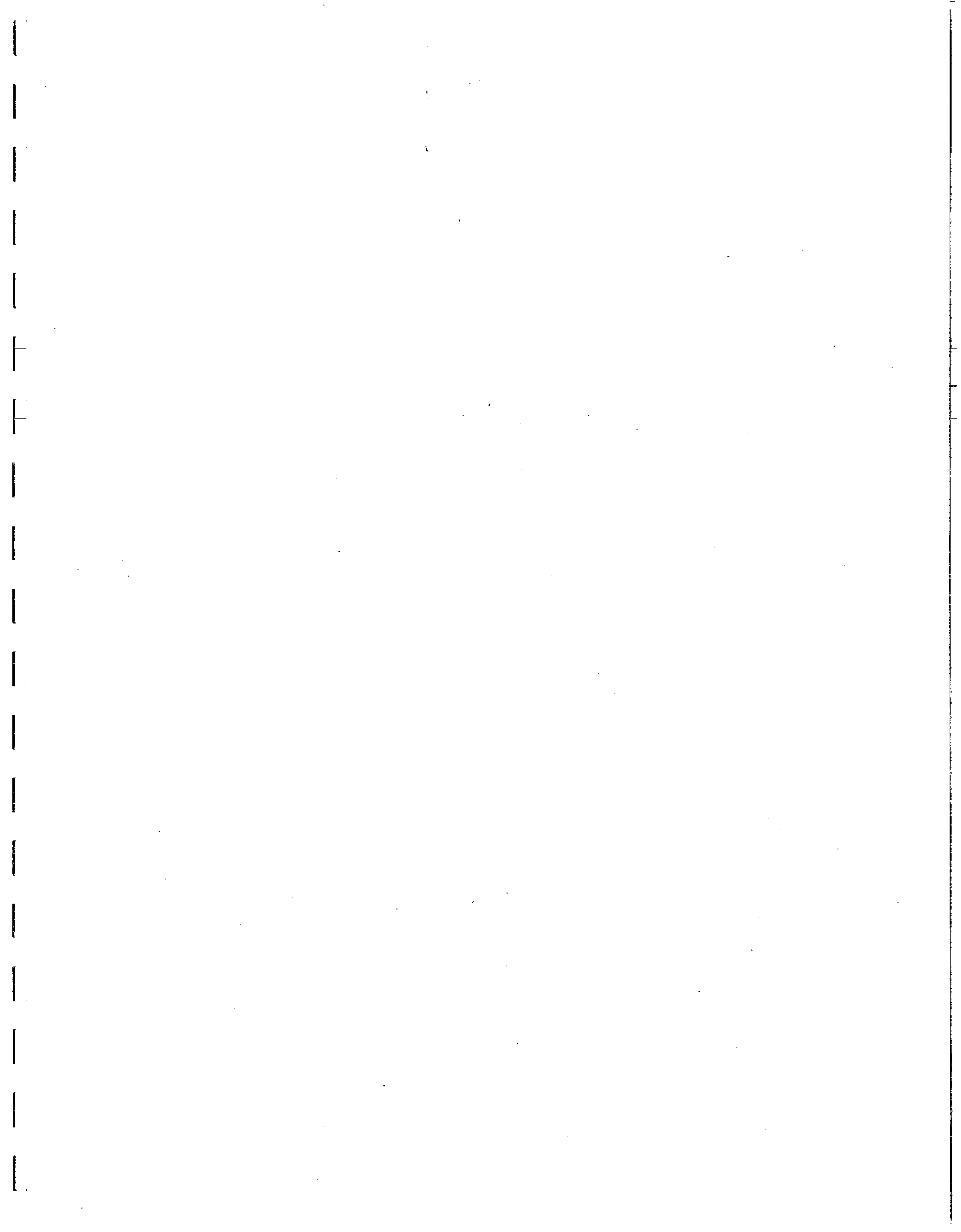
___ (1) Yes.
___ (2) No.

9. Would you prefer the rooms be furnished?

___ (1) Yes.
___ (2) No.

10. Would you consider purchasing a UNO meal plan where you have meals provided at the Student Center?

___ (1) Yes.
___ (2) No.

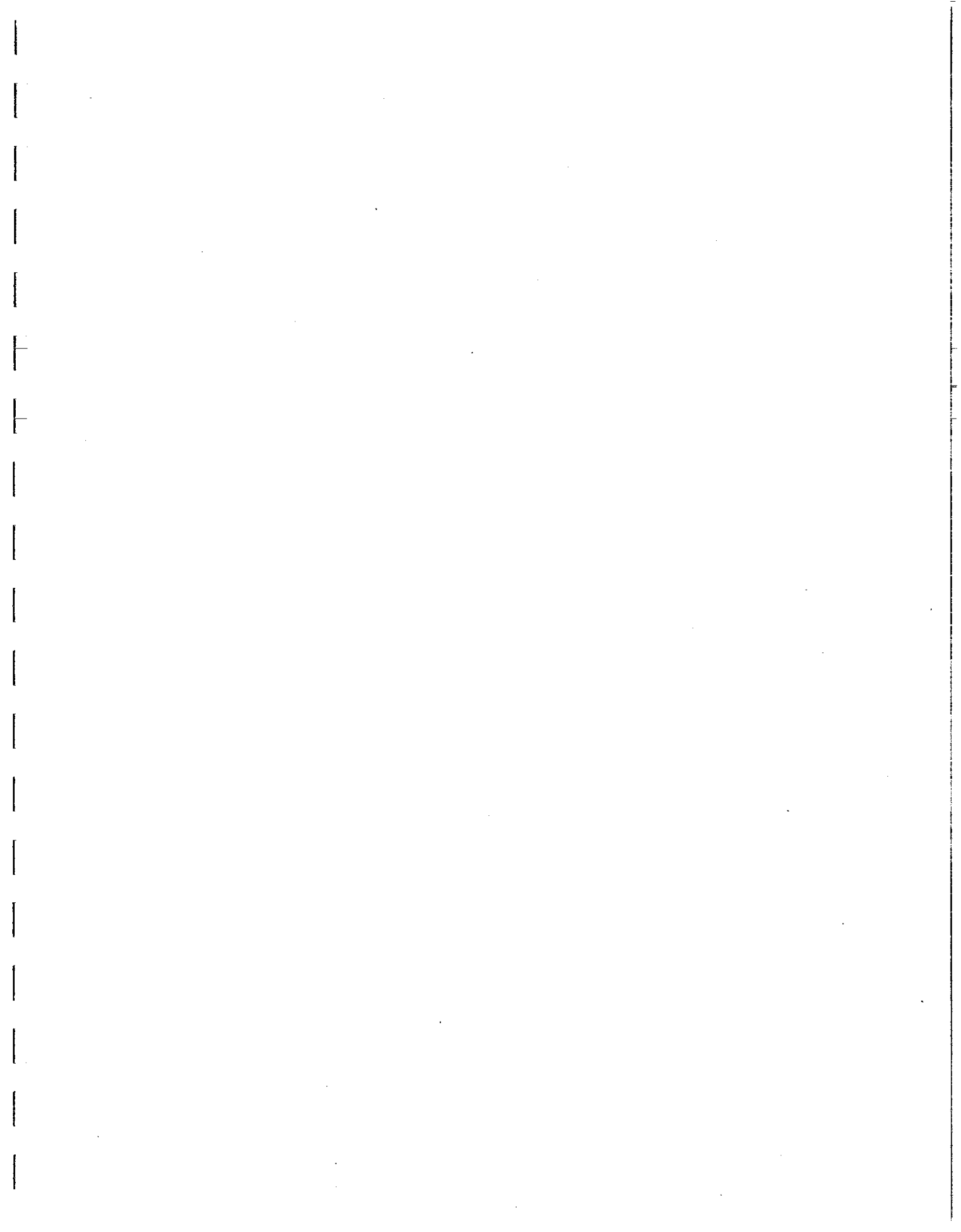


11. There are many amenities to student housing. How important are the following to you?

	Very Important (1)	Important (2)	Not Important (3)
(a) Indoor exercise facilities.	_____	_____	_____
(b) Outdoor recreation areas.	_____	_____	_____
(c) Student lounges.	_____	_____	_____
(d) Quiet study areas.	_____	_____	_____
(e) Meeting rooms.	_____	_____	_____
(f) Cable TV.	_____	_____	_____
(g) Personal computer access.	_____	_____	_____
(h) Off street parking.	_____	_____	_____
(i) Vending machines.	_____	_____	_____
(j) Laundry facilities.	_____	_____	_____
(k) Other _____	_____	_____	_____

12. There are benefits to student housing. How important are the following to you?

	Very Important (1)	Important (2)	Not Important (3)
(a) Low cost.	_____	_____	_____
(b) Walking distance to campus.	_____	_____	_____
(c) Enjoy traditional "college experience".	_____	_____	_____
(d) Security.	_____	_____	_____
(e) Availability of tutors.	_____	_____	_____
(f) Person growth and development.	_____	_____	_____
(g) Independence.	_____	_____	_____
(h) Access to UNO facilities and services .	_____	_____	_____
(i) Other _____	_____	_____	_____



STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Finally, we need a little background information to help UNO interpret the survey data.

13. Do you currently live at home with your parents?

- (1) No. (Go to Question 14)
 (2) Yes. (Go to Question 15)

14. Which best describes your housing situation:

- (1) Live alone or with others.
 (2) Live with spouse.
 (3) Live with relatives.
 (4) Other _____.

15. How much per month do you now pay for housing?

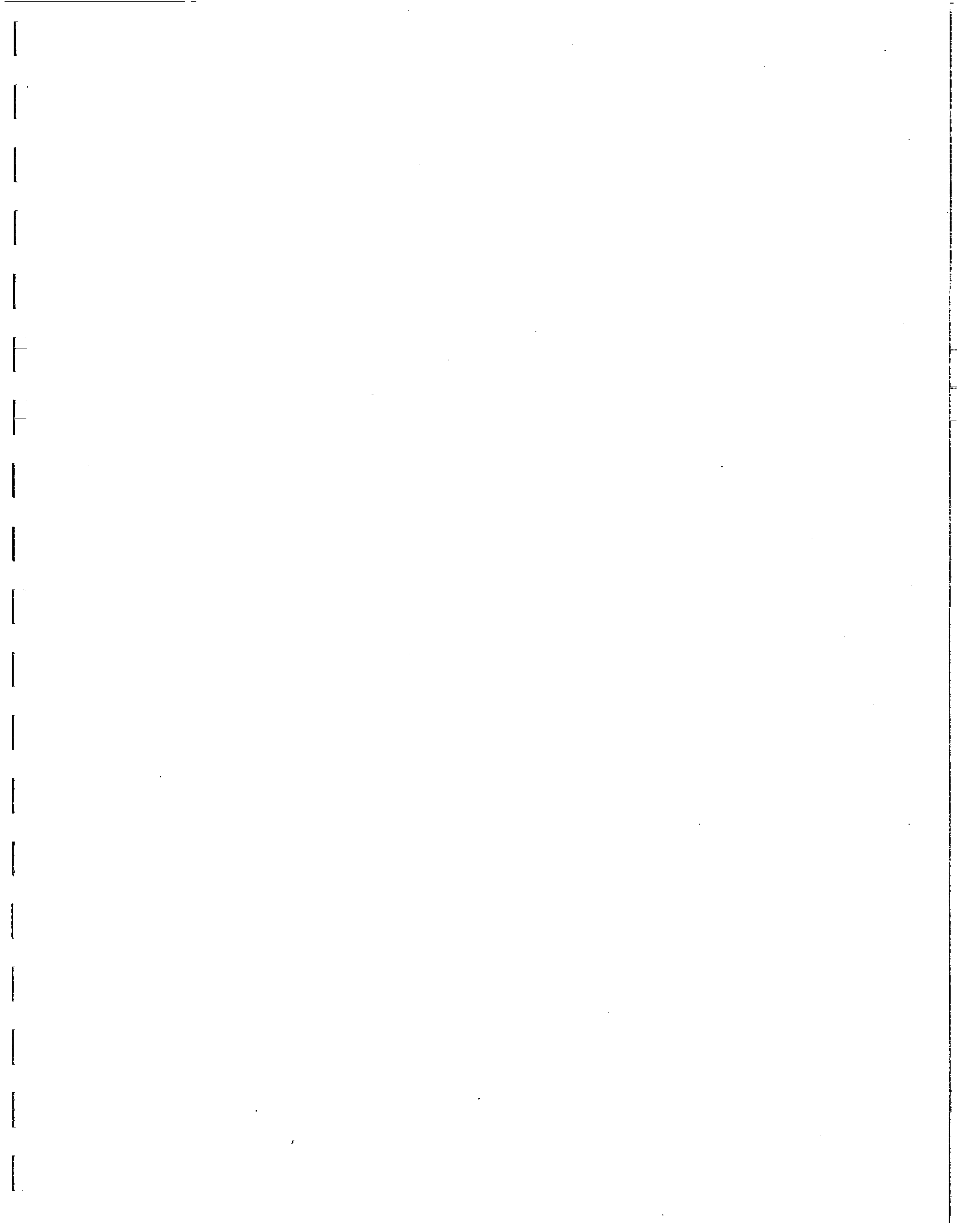
\$ _____

16. How is your housing paid for?

- (1) Parents.
 (2) I help pay.-----> About what percent do you pay? _____ %
 (3) I pay myself.-----> About what percent do you pay? _____ %
 (4) Other.-----> About what percent do you pay? _____ %

17. How would you describe the kind of housing unit you currently live in?
Is it a:

- (1) Single family house.
 (2) Multiple family structure (i.e. town house, duplex, apartment complex).
 (3) Some other kind.



18. Is the Omaha area your hometown?

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No, it is:
 - (1) Lincoln.
 - (2) Nebraska, but not Omaha or Lincoln.
 - (3) Iowa.
 - (4) Other _____.

19. What is your marital status?

- (1) Single.
- (2) Married.

20. Are you employed outside UNO?

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes. Are you: (1) Full time.
 (2) Part time.

21. How long does it take you to get to UNO for your classes?

- (1) Less than 15 minutes.
- (2) From 15 minutes to 30 minutes.
- (3) More than 30 minutes.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

