

Students Welcome

*Measured reaction, some push
for freshman eligibility*

Gender Neutral Housing

UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS BRACED for pushback from parents after the announcement in August that BU was introducing gender neutral housing, a policy that allows students to choose roommates of the opposite sex.

What they got was one complaint and three requests for more information. At the same time, a *BU Today* story about the new policy showed broad interest, with an extraordinary 21,000 readers and 47 comments, most of them supportive. Elsewhere, Nishmin Kashyap, director of housing, noted a surge in hits to Housing's web page explaining the policy (1,064 over the 48-hour period following the news), and the Dean of Students office received a few comments from students who think the policy doesn't go far enough.

Students at BU have been advocating for gender neutral housing, which is now offered by at least 90 colleges and universities nationwide, for at least four years. The University's Student Government revisited the issue in 2012, conducting a survey that saw nearly 2,000 students voicing support. Concerned for lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender students who felt "displeased, unwelcomed, and most importantly, unsafe due to the lack of this option," Student Government representatives approved a proposal



in October of that year that students be allowed to choose roommates of the opposite sex. In December 2012, nearly 50 students held a sit-in in President Robert A. Brown's office. While University officials expressed respect for the spirit of the students' proposal, they felt that some adjustments would make it more tenable, and reworked the policy to be a better fit for BU.

Last summer, Brown approved a University Council recommendation to introduce a gender neutral hous-

ing policy that allows upper-classmen to choose roommates of the opposite sex through direct swaps. Implementation of the policy began in earnest spring semester.

Freshmen will not be eligible to choose gender neutral housing, because University Housing assigns rooms to incoming students, and officials are reluctant to force anyone into gender neutral housing.

Students who advocated for the change say they appreciate the University's decision. "It's important for there to be an open dialogue between students and the administration," says Sasha Goodfriend (CAS'14), the alumni and development coordinator for the Center for Gender, Sexuality & Activism.

"This shows students that BU does care about what they have to say."

While she is pleased that gender neutral housing will be available, Goodfriend wishes the option were also open to freshmen. "Freshmen usually arrive without a community they can trust, and they are even more vulnerable to an unsafe living condition," she says. "We know that there are freshmen who move off campus, or switch dorms, because of exactly this reason." **LESLIE FRIDAY**

STEVE MC LAUGHLIN



Breaking Good

Emmy Award-winning actor Bryan Cranston (right), star of the AMC television series *Breaking Bad*, spent an evening last semester chatting with Brian Kersowitz, a screenwriter and BU in LA lecturer, and the program's film and television students.