

Henry Bates, *Zahm House Senator*
Jordan Lydon, *Farley Hall Senator*
Elaine Teeters, *McGlenn Hall Senator*
Benjamin Erhardt, *Keough Hall Senator*
Bridget Arbuckle, *Cavanaugh Hall Senator*

A RESOLUTION RESPONDING TO THE DISBANDMENT OF ZAHM HOUSE

Whereas, the University of Notre Dame’s Campus Life [website](#) states that the University “strive[s] to care for the needs of all who study here, physically, emotionally, and spiritually”;

Whereas, the University of Notre Dame’s Residential Life [website](#) states that in-person and communal residential living is “an essential component of the holistic formation of a Notre Dame education”;

Whereas, on March 15, 2021, members of the University of Notre Dame’s Division of Student Affairs and Department of Residential Life announced that, beginning in Fall 2021, Zahm House will become a transitional residence hall in which other dorm communities will live while their buildings undergo renovations, and that Zahm House as a residence hall community will be permanently disbanded;

Whereas, this decision was handed down by University leadership to the residents of Zahm House with no prior indication of such drastic action potentially taking place and little to no dialogue being opened with any residents of Zahm House on the topic of Zahm’s current and patterned flaws as a residence hall community;

Whereas, following the decision, Zahm residents have been given only two weeks to decide whether they would like to live off-campus for the 2021-2022 school year or transfer to another dorm with a maximum of three fellow Zahm residents;

Whereas, students wishing to transfer dorms are given a maximum of two dorm choices and given no guarantees that they will be placed in their dorm of preference;

Whereas, the primary rationale behind disbanding the Zahm House community was explained as disrespect towards university officials, significant vandalism, high turnover of hall staff, and lack of compliance with university COVID protocols;

Whereas, while the Student Senate agrees that individuals who commit actions that violate, disrespect, or disregard the safety and well-being of individual members of the student body or the Notre Dame community as a whole should be reprimanded in an appropriate manner, it believes that by acting autocratically and disbanding Zahm House entirely, the University is:

- 1) Avoiding any real conflict resolution with those who have violated University guidelines;
- 2) Unfairly punishing the many residents who have long fostered positive community in Zahm in line with values consistent with the spirit of Notre Dame and even worked

further to address the flaws of the community in a restorative and constructive manner;
and

- 3) Failing to effectively address serious campus life issues that plague almost every residence hall on campus, not just Zahm, including vandalism, Campus Compact violations, and sexual harassment and assault;

Whereas, this decision follows the University administration's disturbing pattern of disregarding input from students when making significant changes to campus life that has played out at various times over the past several years (most recently addressed by the Student Senate in the consideration of [P 2021-03](#)) and sets a dangerous precedent for future actions against other dorm communities;

Whereas, the University administration's course of action to disband Zahm House has only added to a growing sense of division between students and University leadership that has already been exacerbated due to campus life policy discrepancies amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as discussed previously in [SS 2021-27](#);

Whereas, the student body and alumni of the University of Notre Dame have expressed disappointment in the decision made by the University and support for the Zahm community, which can be seen in a [petition](#) supporting Zahm that has garnered over 6,000 signatures;

Whereas, on the [homepage](#) of Residential Life's website, an image of Zahm House is featured with the caption, "Your Residential Life," to support the university's reputation for establishing dorm communities that are "unlike any other in American higher education," even after the decision to disband Zahm House;

Whereas, Notre Dame has previously set a precedent of allowing dorm communities to stay together when permanent residence halls have been disbanded, such as in the cases of Flanner, Grace, Pangborn, and Holy Cross Hall;

Whereas, in previous cases of dorm dissolution, residents have been given far more advanced notice, as is listed in an [article](#) detailing the history of Grace and Flanner Halls;

Whereas, the announcement of this decision has added a great deal of stress to students living in Zahm House in an already-stressful academic year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as highlighted in [SS 2021-14](#), which states, "the COVID-19 pandemic [has exacerbated] negative experiences with mental health, such as feelings of loneliness, isolation, anxiety and depression" amongst students;

Whereas, challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have led University leadership to implement restrictions on campus life to curb virus transmission that have included bans or limitations on students from entering residence halls in which they do not live for informal socialization;

Resolution SS 2021-36**March 24, 2021**

Whereas, many on-campus students, especially First-Years, have relied on their residence hall communities throughout the academic year to ensure positive social well-being due to the aforementioned restrictions placed on entrance into other dorms;

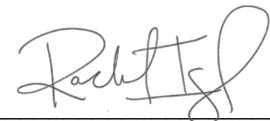
Whereas, a large number of Zahm First-Year students have expressed interest in living together in some capacity in the subsequent academic year, with a [letter from a First-Year representative](#) stating, “Breaking us apart and spreading us across campus to start from scratch will cause us irreversible damage”;

Whereas, the decision has also placed uncertainty and an undue burden on current Zahm residents looking to become Resident Assistants as Seniors, especially for those residents who may depend upon the room and board discount to help them attend the University;

Whereas, an [open letter](#) authored by current and past members of Zahm House Government published in *The Observer* on March 19, 2021 states, “our community wishes to open a dialogue” with University administrators;

***Resolved*, the Student Senate of the University of Notre Dame du Lac:**

- 1. Condemns the violation of public due process and dialogue with the greater Zahm community in the Division of Student Affairs’s decision to disband Zahm House and encourages both transparency and dialogue in future actions relating to significant changes to residential life and campus life policies;**
- 2. Urges that the Department of Residential Life eases the transition for the Zahm residents -- especially the current First-Year class -- to their new living communities for the 2021-2022 academic year by:**
 - a. Increasing the number of students able to move as a group to a new residence hall community;**
 - b. Offering mental health resources for Zahm residents who may be distressed at this time; and**
 - c. Helping facilitate financial relief for Zahm Juniors who may be at a disadvantage pursuing Resident Assistant positions for the 2021-2022 academic year in a residence hall they have not yet lived in;**
- 3. Requests that University leadership accept the invitation for dialogue with Zahm community members to help create a more effective action plan for Zahm’s transition in the coming months.**



Rachel Ingal
Student Body President