



Interest Houses at
Whitman

Interest Houses

The Interest House Community is a place where living and learning are combined to give residents an opportunity to grow as students, housemates and individuals. In an interest house, you might prolong a class discussion about Cervantes over lunch with your Spanish professor or learn origami with your friends at a study break. You may participate in a faculty-led discussion on U.S.-China trade relations, spend a morning recycling with the Environmental House, or concoct French pastries for a Sunday brunch. Motivation and teamwork within the house make the possibilities limited only by student imagination.



Created in the 1970s, Whitman's Interest House Community was the first of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. Today, more than 20 percent of all students reside in an interest house at some point during their Whitman career. Currently, there are 11 interest houses on campus: Tekisuijuku (Japanese House, known as the Tek), Outhouse (Environmental House), La Maison Française (French House, known as La Maison), La Casa Hispánica (Spanish House, known as La Casa), Fine Arts House, Global Awareness House, Community Service House, Das Deutsche Haus (German House), MECCA (Multi-Ethnic Center for Cultural Awareness), Asian Studies House and the Writing House.



In general, this housing option is reserved for sophomores, juniors and seniors. The popularity of the program almost always exceeds the number of available spaces. A written application and an interview with the resident assistant are required parts of the application process. Familiarity with the language and enrollment in relevant courses also are important components. Residents should be willing to help initiate and present programs on the house topic to the campus community.



Interest house residents eat four dinners a week with their house, as well as participate in chores, weekly house meetings and program planning sessions. The entire Interest House Community gathers each Sunday morning for a brunch hosted by two houses in the neighborhood. Once a semester, the houses

collectively sponsor an all-campus program, such as the Progressive Party and the Interest House Block Party.

Language Houses

A native speaker lives in each of the language houses to help residents improve their language skills and learn about the culture and customs of their country. Native speakers are hired by the Foreign



Languages and Literatures Department, and they assist with language classes while also taking Whitman classes. Speaking the native language while in these houses offers students an opportunity to improve their skills, collaborate with other students and continue to learn outside of the classroom. Many students live in the houses before participating in study abroad programs in order to hone their foreign language capabilities. Residents may host tables in the dining halls to further develop their conversational skills.



La Casa Hispana | 412 Boyer Ave.

Residents of La Casa immerse themselves in the culture and language of Spanish-speaking countries. The house holds all-campus programs, such as salsa dances and Day of the Dead festivities, which present the art and culture of Spanish-speaking countries to the campus. La Casa also focuses on the Spanish language with frequent “challenge weeks” when the residents can speak only Spanish. Residents are involved with the Latino community in Walla Walla by working at the farm labor camp, tutoring at a local elementary school and working with Whitman’s Club Latino to organize symposiums on Anglo-Latino community relations.



Das Deutsche Haus | 401 Cypress St.

Every fall, the house takes on a true German ambiance with the annual Oktoberfest celebration, which includes traditional German foods and a dance. Each winter the German House celebrates the German holiday of St. Nicholas Day, a holiday in which candy is placed in the shoes of individuals who have behaved throughout the year. In addition to these two major activities, the residents show German films and host lectures and discussions on German art, philosophy and politics.



La Maison Française | 418 Boyer Ave.

La Maison Française promotes the exploration and celebration of French language and culture. Residents share the culture with the rest of campus through French film showings, Mardi Gras celebrations, or informational programs about studying abroad in France. The French House also hosts Quarter Coffee Café, which features the ambiance of a French café with home-made desserts/beverages (served for the price of one quarter) to celebrate French-speaking cultures.



Tekisuijuku | 528 University St.

The name “Tekisui” means “drops of water falling into pools and small streams.” This name was given to the house as a fitting complement to Walla Walla, a name that can be understood as “many small rivers.” The residents of the Tekisuijuku live in an atmosphere much like that of a traditional Japanese home. Meals are eaten while kneeling at a low table, shoes are removed at the entrance, and residents share in the learning of Japanese culture and language.

Writing House | 121 Otis St.

From poets to playwrights, the Writing House has been home to the best and brightest literary minds at Whitman for years. Opportunities abound for interested students: the house hosts a weekly writing workshop and open mic nights, invites authors to campus, and sponsors programs that explore both the interpersonal and introspective sides of writing. For residents, the house is a close-knit community of like-minded friends — the perfect place to explore creativity and identity through writing.



Environmental House | 424 Boyer Ave.

This house is home to residents passionate about finding solutions to environmental issues at Whitman, in the larger Walla Walla community and in the world. The Environmental House was the impetus behind Whitman’s comprehensive recycling program. Each Sunday, members of the “Outhouse” (as it is affectionately called) collect recyclables from the residence halls. The Outhouse is equipped with solar lights that demonstrate the importance of using renewable, sustainable sources of energy.



Fine Arts House | 404 Boyer Ave.

Established to promote art activities on campus, this house sponsors programs that highlight the visual arts, music, theater, dance, literature and even culinary arts. An interest in the arts is all that is needed to be a vital member of the house. The Fine Arts House actively supports the art community on campus. Residents are often involved in music, theater and dance productions on campus. The house regularly holds Artist's Colony, which invites the campus to explore and participate in different forms of art.

Global Awareness House | 104 Merriam St.

The Global House helps raise campus awareness of the rest of the world. The house focuses both on cultural awareness and on political awareness, as both interconnect and are necessary for gaining an understanding of one's place in the world. The house has sponsored the hunger banquet, speakers with global relevance and cultural nights, in addition to serving as a meeting place for campus clubs.



Asian Studies House | 112 Otis St.

In the Asian Studies House, students explore the language, art, history, politics and culture of various Asian nations. Celebrations such as the Lunar Festival and Chinese New Year bring students and faculty together for evenings of food and games as they learn more about the customs of these Asian cultures. Each year, a visiting scholar from a Chinese university lives in the house during his or her yearlong stay. These scholars are professors of English at their universities in China and serve as resources for students studying Chinese language or culture.



Community Service House | 406 Cypress St.

Residents of this house perform community service both at Whitman and beyond. Residents have organized all-campus events such as trick-or-canning on Halloween and breast casting (in collaboration with the Fine Arts House) in the spring. In addition, residents of the house make a commitment to participate in individual community service activities. The house is the only interest house not required to be on a meal plan. Instead, residents share responsibility for the cost of food as well as cooking and cleaning.



MECCA | 106 Otis St.

The Multi-Ethnic Center for Cultural Awareness serves as one of the primary campus resources for students to become more culturally aware. The house is used as a meeting area for a variety of multi-ethnic student organizations. MECCA's residents are active in the coordinating of programs and events that increase awareness of diversity and minority concerns, such as diversity forums.



“The community that arises from sharing space and putting on programs together is something I’d never entirely expected. It has made this year so very much better than I thought possible.”

– Writing House resident



“The best part of the IHC is living with a small group of people and getting the chance to know my peers closely.”

– IHC resident



For additional information about living in an interest house at Whitman please contact:

WHITMAN COLLEGE

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