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Welcome to College Bound, Notre Dame Admissions' podcast. We're super excited to share more about the student experience with you today, and we'll hopefully attempt to settle a debate about the best dorm on campus.

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I'm Maria Finan, I personally think that Breen-Phillips Hall is the best dorm on campus. I am a Double Domer myself, so I received my bachelor's and master's degrees at Notre Dame, but I'll let Matt introduce our topic a bit more for today and our special guests.

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Yes we're very excited to have students on our podcast. My name is Matt Greene. I am also in the Admissions office with Maria. I am a graduate of Notre Dame. I graduated in 2016, and I studied American Studies. I lived in Keough Hall. Today, we are talking about the residential life on campus at Notre Dame, and with us to talk about that today we have Tajae Thompson and Connor Patrick.

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Hi, my name is Tajae Thompson. I'm from West Palm Beach, Florida. I'm currently double majoring in Marketing and English with a minor in Education, Schooling and Society. This year I am the president of Johnson Family Hall, I'm a member of the Black Student Association, I write for HerCampus, and I am a Balfour-Hesburgh Scholar.

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Hi, everyone. My name is Connor Patrick. I am a sophomore living in Dillon Hall on campus. I'll explain later why Dillon Hall is truly the best on campus. I'm a Philosophy major with minors in Liturgical Music, Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, and Digital Marketing. And outside of academics, I'm involved in the Voices of Faith gospel choir, I'm a fellow for the University's God and the Good Life program, and I work as a hall clerk here in my dorm.

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Well, thank you both. Connor, can you describe how residential life works at Notre Dame?

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Absolutely. The residential life system at Notre Dame I think is truly unique and it's one of the reasons why I chose Notre Dame, actually. The residential life system basically serves as the backbone of someone's time here at Notre Dame. So there are 33 different residence halls on campus, and those dorms are all single-sex, but they have mixed majors, mixed years so you could have a senior living right next to a freshman and they could become best friends. There's just so much a mixture between people of all different walks of life all different years, all different majors, all different places across the country.

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In fact, you won't get placed with someone from your own zip code in the same room with you your first year at Notre Dame, just so you meet people from all over the place. These dorms truly are special; each dorm has its own mascot, has its own crest with its own colors and designs, each dorm has its own government, has its own special events. Each dorm has its own dances, like formal dances and others. There's absolutely amazing events that helped to bring the community together.

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When I say that Residential Life forms one of the backbones of the student experience, I truly mean that. These are the people that you'll meet right during your Welcome Weekend on campus, and you stay close to, whether you're just close friends with them or even just acquaintances with them.

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Yes, definitely, everything Connor said was fantastic about the dorm life on campus. But I guess another interesting aspect about housing is that you have guaranteed housing for the four years. I'm from Florida, so I know that at other universities down there you might have to move off campus because there's many more students.

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We are required to stay on campus for three years, and that was actually made policy my year. I forgot to mention I'm a junior (Class of 2022), and your study abroad does count toward this. It might seem like it's kind of weird that you have to stay on campus for three years, but it really is convenient, because I think Notre Dame is the perfect size, where living in your dorm is more convenient than say living off campus because you'll have a five minute walk to class, rather than getting a car to drive from wherever to and then the bus is also right there that leaves right from Library Circle to go to Walmart or the mall if you do need somewhere to go.

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Something about Notre Dame that I actually like is that we don't have a Greek life. I always say that we take the best part of sororities and fraternities and then brings that here to the dorm system because your dorm is like your family-- there's a community around it. You have, like Connor was saying, we have mascots, we have formals, we have dances. And you know, you grow so close, some of your closest friends are coming from your dorm, whether in your section or out of your section.

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And once again, to reference Connor, you're living right next to seniors, juniors, freshmen, so my friends are all different years, from all different states. Dorm life here is really unique and in my three years here, I've lived in three different dorms.

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My freshman year, I was in a dorm but then I chose the opportunity to move out and live in Pangborn, which they said if you lived in Pangborn for a year, you had the opportunity to move to into the new dorm and you got first pick for rooms. I'm currently in the new dorm on campus, and the community that we brought over from Pangborn here has been one of my favorite things about the dorm.

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We've doubled in size, but I feel like that main core aspect of inclusion and acceptance has maintained with us and I feel when I am at home because my freshman year I found myself saying Oh I'm going back to my dorm but now, I feel I hear myself saying Oh I'm going home.

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So I just spoke a lot about what I love most about my dorm, but Connor, tell me about Dillon.

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Yes, Dillon is considered to be the home of the smartest, strongest, and humblest people on all of Notre Dame's campus. But anyways, it's truly a special community here today like you are a community wasn't actually in Dillon Hall last year because Dillon, being an older dorm built around the 1930s, was

renovated so they were in a different hall community last year and we moved back into Dillon this year, and it's just such a special place, and such a special family.

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We have an amazing location. We're right next to one of my favorite buildings on campus- South Dining Hall, so it's so easy to just go right over it, it's just so easy. It's a really short walk or even shorter bike ride or scooter ride over to a lot of academic buildings and such. But beyond that, the community here is just really special. And we have a lot of great traditions here that I just absolutely love, and probably favorite is the milkshake Mass. Dillon hosts a special mass at 10:00 p.m., which might sound late to some of our high schoolers listening, but once you get adjusted to college life, it's actually rather early.

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People from all over the place come to this mass. It's not just Dillon people; we have students from all other dorms on campus, and people that come across the street from St. Mary's. So it's usually packed, it's usually standing room only, and then after the mass, the men of Dillon Hall make special milkshakes for everyone. I actually play the tambourine in the Mass Choir for Milkshake Mass, and there are just so many other ways to get involved here in Dillon, whether that be the annual SYR, or the formal dance, or work for the hall. It's just a really special place. Some of my closest friends are here in Dillon, and it's just a place that I am very proud to call home. Even if we are not the most humble!

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Thanks for sharing that, I think that's so much fun and part of what makes Notre Dame so unique. Tajae, I want to give you a chance to share what are some of your favorite events.

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Yeah, signature events are always a great time just to see what students can put together. But right now, for Johnson Family Hall, we are technically in the beginning of our second year in existence, so we're still trying to work to establish those signature events. We have like a mini thing happening on Saturday for the first time. We're going to do the "Ride of the Valkyries," is what we're calling it because our mascot is the Valkyries, and it's just basically on Football Saturday, we're going to get up like at 7:00 a.m. and run around campus, blasting music, doing our Valkyrie call, hopefully to wake some people up get ready for football.

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But we're just really taking this as an opportunity, because I said we doubled in size from last year to now to have everyone involved in this process of creating a signature because this is something that's going to stay at Notre Dame for generations. So you know we can have a bunch of trial and error over these next few years but it'd be really great if everyone can be involved on this process.

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But as for other signature events outside of J-Fam, I'm a big fan of LHOP, which is Lewis House of Pancakes. I love breakfast food, so being able to have breakfast at midnight at one of my favorite girl dorms, Lewis Hall, is a lot of fun. And then I also like the Keenan Revue, which happens in February. Great jokes, a lot of inside jokes, you never know what they're gonna do.

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I'm also a big fan of the Casino Night hosted by McGlinn Hall, another one of the girls' dorms on campus. That, in recent years, seems to have gained a lot of popularity, and I'm all for it. I love it. It's a great night where you can just go with your friends, maybe dress up a little bit. I myself I wore a nice suit and bow tie

to Casino Night this past year, and it was just such a great time, even though I have no idea how to play any of those games.

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All the signature events go to support a charity in the South Bend area or just into the wider community, whether it's St. Albert's, a local Catholic Church, or the South Bend Center for the Homeless. All of the events raise money to go to those charities, every dorm has a specific charity that they donate to. So, no matter what event you choose to go to, all the proceeds go to helping a good cause.

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I absolutely love that, I think you've all identified some really great events on campus and not that I want to help Matt strengthen his case for why Keough is the best, but one of my personal favorite signature events on campus is the Keough Hall Chariot Race. If you could possibly imagine people physically pulling chariots, usually with smallest freshmen you can find on the back, and running around in a race, it's exactly what the fun of the chariot races. Matt, do you want to argue why you think Keough is the best before we say farewell today?

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Of course, it's really not an argument because it's just a fact. I'm still, of course, claiming all these years later, that Keough is the best. The guys that I met in the dorm were fantastic and some of my best friends. So with that, it's no contest. Keough Hall is the best dorm on campus, and like Dillon, we are close to South Dining Hall as well. Being close to food to eat today.

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Do you want to make a good argument for why some of the women's dorms are clearly the best on campus.

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You know, I think that all of the women's dorms definitely get good over the men's dorms. Johnson Family, even though we're the new, we are the best I think. And it's because of the community. Like Matt was saying, the community is insane and even more so for us it was the first year they randomly assigned to this new dorm, a dorm that didn't have traditions yet, they didn't have signature events yet, and they've all just been so ready, willing and excited to help plan this new "Ride of the Valkyries" thing we're doing this Football Saturday.

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This idea was all them, and I just ordered things for it. They told me what they would do and I just made sure it happens. And it is not just them, but it's everybody. Everyone came in here with an openness and a willingness to help build a community and make sure everyone feels at home and I feel like honestly there is not a single person in this dorm who I could not have dinner with. Just you know, great friends that I know are going to last until we have Domer weddings, and you know all of that. So I'm excited to see where the future goes and how we put things together, and we're ready to win Hall of the Year this year.

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Connor, I know you said you guys are the humblest on campus. Why is Dillon the best?

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Oh there's so many reasons, I would have to spend hours explaining why do is the best hall on campus. I guess I'll try and summarize of first: from location, location, location, to such revolutionary ideas like the

Milkshake Mass- someone thought to put the Catholic Mass together with milkshakes. It's just genius! It goes back to us being the smartest and strongest of all dorms, but what truly is really a special community here. I felt so welcome in our dorm, and some of the people I've met here I think will truly be my friends not just here at Notre Dame, but beyond.

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And that's that's just the nature of Residential Life at Notre Dame. And that's the way that it works and in all the dorms because of the way that it's structured and designed here at Notre Dame. But of course, I have to say that Dillon is the best simply, that simply can't be beat.

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Well, you've all made some really great arguments and I want to echo that. I think Breen Phillips Hall is the best. BP is home of the "Babes." I did meet some of my very best friends at Notre Dame, who did stand up at my Domer wedding, so I can confirm that that is something that genuinely happens. I always loved BP because the girls I lived with were just such amazing individuals. I would argue that we also have a fantastic location. My freshman year, I moved in and I had a dome view. So we do not guarantee views of the dome at all dorm rooms on campus, but most of my years at Notre Dame, I did have one. I was right next to the library.

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One of my favorite things about BP is that in the spring during our spirit week we have traditionally held a pig roast. If you don't know BP, "Home of the Babes, our mascot is a pig. To my knowledge, we are the only dorm on campus that roasts our own mascot, and that is quite the unique claim to fame. So not only do we have a great sense of community and a great sense of humor, but in the wonderful Keenan Revue that our students have talked about, BP often has a starring role.

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We're really proud of our consistent presence at the Revue, but as you heard from everyone our dorms are just really special and I think community is something that Notre Dame does better than most schools.

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I really want to say thanks to Tajae and Connor. We really appreciate you joining us sharing your passion, your humor, and we appreciate all you're doing in your residential hall communities and on campus. I don't know that we're going to kind of settle the debate of best dorm on campus, but I think that's part of the fun of Notre Dame.

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For all of you who tuned in and listened, Matt and I are looking forward to talking to you next week about faith and service at Notre Dame. In the meantime, you can visit our website if you'd like to connect with us. Feel free to send us a message on Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat @NDAdmissions, or you can follow Notre Dame on Facebook. Thanks so much. See you next week.