Crisis Report

Housing Instability, Leadership Failures, and Student Safety at Dillard University

Prepared for the Board of Trustees.

Submitted by: De'Juan Fuel

Date: October 21, 2026

A formal student report requesting immediate intervention and accountability.

Dillard University is facing a housing crisis that has placed students in unsafe living conditions, disrupted their academic responsibilities, and eroded trust in institutional leadership. This document presents a clear, factual account of the events that unfolded since the catastrophic ceiling collapse in Gentilly Gardens, and the emergency contractor assessment that led to a sudden, uncoordinated relocation order affecting dozens of students.

The evidence collected shows a pattern of reactive decision-making, inconsistent communication, and a failure to prioritize student safety. Students received contradictory timelines, were pressured through informal channels, and were ultimately threatened with disciplinary action if they did not vacate their living spaces within forty-eight hours. These actions occurred despite long-standing knowledge of structural issues in multiple residence halls and despite students paying $ 6,000- $8,000 per semester for housing that was not safely maintained.

The impact on the student body cannot be overstated. Seniors preparing for graduate school, students managing heavy academic loads, and residents with established routines have all experienced anxiety, instability, and academic disruption. Many students have been moved into rooms previously marked offline because of mold, ventilation issues, or structural concerns. Others have been assigned to share spaces that do not match the housing arrangements they paid for or the conditions they were promised.

This report respectfully requests that the board of trustees intervene to pause all relocations until full structural investigations are completed, and hold accountable the leaders whose decisions and omissions have contributed to the crisis. This document is not meant to harm the institution, but to protect the students who are its heart. We seek transparency, safety, and leadership that reflects the values Dillard University claims to uphold.

Section 2: Background and Context of The Housing Crisis

Gentilly Gardens has been part of Dillard University's residential landscape for decades, and during that time students have repeatedly reported concerns about structural deterioration, water intrusion, mold, ventilation issues, and inconsistent maintenance. These issues were not isolated to a single residence hall; students have reported similar problems in other residence halls, including Williams Hall and Hartzell, where they have experienced flooding, mold growth, and compromised living conditions. Although various administrations knew about these problems over the years, they did not address them comprehensively or proactively.

Early in the 2026-27 academic year, a ceiling collapsed on a student in a Gentilly Gardens apartment. Students learned of this situation through word of mouth from other students. An contractual assessment then took place over 3 or 4 days and identified units with conditions requiring immediate attention. Although the university did not formally communicate the incident details to residents, the event directly influenced the urgency and scope of the relocation process that followed.

Before this incident, the university planned to end occupancy of Gentilly Gardens at the end of the Spring 2027 Semester, allowing students to complete the academic year before transitioning to newer housing options. However, the emergency assessment abruptly shifted the long-term plan to an immediate relocation order affecting dozens of students. This sudden change created confusion, anxiety, and instability, particularly for seniors and students with demanding academic schedules who had intentionally chosen their housing based on proximity, privacy, and reliability.

Between October 8 and October 20, students received a series of emails, informal messages, and official notices that rapidly escalated from emergency Zoom meetings to

relocation instructions, contradictory timelines, and ultimately an emergency relocation order. The speed and inconsistency of these communications set the stage for the challenges described in the following sections, where the impact of these decisions on student safety, academic performance, and emotional well-being becomes clear.

Section 3: Leadership Crisis and Administrative Failures

Effective leadership in a university setting requires clarity, coordination, and a proactive commitment to student safety. During a crisis, students depend on administrators to communicate consistently, make decisions based on accurate information, and uphold the trust that students place in the institution. During the Gentilly Gardens relocation, these expectations were not met. Instead, students experienced reactive decision-making, inconsistent messaging, and a lack of coordinated leadership that intensified confusion and distress across the campus community.

The relocation process began only after the ceiling collapse in Gentilly Gardens and the subsequent lawsuit filed by the affected resident. Although the university had planned to close the Gardens at the end of the Spring 2027 semester, it took no proactive steps to address long-standing structural concerns before the incident. The emergency contractor assessment that followed was conducted under pressure, and the decisions made afterward reflected a reactive posture rather than a thoughtful, student-centered plan. The school did not inform students of the assessment's findings or provide clear explanations for the sudden shift from a long-term closure plan to an immediate relocation order.

Communication from university leadership and Residential Life was inconsistent and often contradictory. Some students were told they were part of Phase 3 and would not need to move until November, while others received relocation instructions with less than forty-eight

hours' notice. In my case, the Housing Director explicitly told me I would remain in my apartment until November because I had not received the earlier relocation email. Days later, I received a new assignment and an Emergency Relocation Order requiring me to vacate my apartment by October 22. These contradictions created unnecessary confusion and undermined confidence in the institution's ability to manage the crisis responsibly.

The lack of coordination between departments further contributed to the instability students experienced. Residential Life communicated via emails, informal GroupMe messages, and last-minute notices, while Facilities issued formal relocation orders and **threatened disciplinary action**. The FAQ released on October 13 stated that Phase 3 residents could remain until the end of the semester, yet later communications contradicted it. Students were left to navigate conflicting instructions without a clear understanding of who was making decisions or how those decisions were being evaluated.

Most concerning is the failure to prioritize student safety and welfare throughout this process. Students were moved into rooms previously marked offline due to mold, ventilation issues, or structural concerns. Others were assigned to shared spaces that did not align with the housing arrangements they paid for or the conditions they were promised. The urgency of the relocation overshadowed the need to ensure that receiving spaces were safe, inspected, and appropriate for student living. This approach placed students at risk and demonstrated a disregard for the basic standards of care that should guide institutional decision-making.

As a result, many students have expressed **a profound loss of confidence in university leadership**. This sentiment is not rooted in emotion alone, but in documented inconsistencies, a lack of transparency, and decisions that have directly harmed students academically, financially, and personally. Students deserve leadership that communicates clearly, acts responsibly, and

places their well-being at the center of every decision. The events of this relocation show that these expectations were not met and call for meaningful accountability and structural change.

Section 4: Housing Safety Crisis

University housing is expected to provide students with a safe, stable, and healthy environment in which they can live, study, and participate fully in campus life. This expectation is not merely a matter of comfort; it is a foundational responsibility of any institution that houses students. When students pay thousands of dollars per semester for residential accommodations, they expect the spaces provided to meet basic standards of habitability. In recent years, however, Dillard University's residential facilities have not consistently met these standards, and the conditions documented across multiple residence halls reveal a pattern of neglect that has placed students at risk.

Students have long known Gentilly Gardens as a residence hall with significant structural and environmental concerns. Residents have reported visible, persistent mold growth, water intrusion, ventilation issues, and signs of deterioration. These issues were not isolated incidents but recurring problems spanning multiple units and academic years. Despite this, the Gardens remained fully occupied, and no comprehensive remediation plan was implemented. The ceiling collapse was not an unpredictable event; it culminated years of deferred maintenance and unaddressed structural concerns.

The safety issues extend beyond Gentilly Gardens. Students in Williams Hall have reported mold, rusted fixtures, and ventilation problems that have contributed to **respiratory illnesses** and discomfort. Hartzell Hall has experienced flooding and structural failures, including

a wall collapse that raised serious questions about the building's integrity. Even the Innovation Collective, which is one of the newer residential facilities, has had reports of malfunctioning air conditioning, rodent sightings, and inconsistent hot water. These conditions show that the housing crisis isn't confined to a single building; it reflects a broader pattern of inadequate maintenance and oversight across campus.

The relocation process intensified these concerns. In the rush to move students out of Gentilly Gardens, some were assigned to rooms **previously marked offline for mold or ventilation issues**. Others were placed in shared spaces that did not align with the housing arrangements they paid for or the conditions they were promised. In one reported case, a student's floor was so deteriorated that walking across it felt unstable, as though the surface could give way. Assigning students to spaces with known safety concerns undermines the purpose of relocation and places them in environments that may be more hazardous than the ones they left.

These unsafe conditions have directly affected student health, stability, and academic performance. Students have experienced anxiety, sleep disruption, and physical discomfort as a result of living in compromised environments. Seniors preparing for graduate school, students managing demanding academic schedules, and residents with chronic health conditions have all been affected. Unsafe housing has made it difficult for students to focus on their studies, maintain routines, and feel secure in their living spaces. The housing crisis is not only a facilities issue; it is a student welfare issue that **demands immediate and comprehensive attention.**

Section 5: Communication Failure and Coercive Messaging

Clear, consistent, and transparent communication is essential during any institutional crisis. Students rely on university leadership for accurate information, realistic timelines, and guidance that reflects both the urgency of the situation and the dignity of those affected. In the days following the contractor assessment of Gentilly Gardens, Dillard University's communication did not meet these standards. Instead, students received a series of inconsistent, contradictory, and at times coercive messages that created confusion and distress during an already challenging period.

The communication timeline between October 8 and October 20 illustrates how quickly the situation escalated without a coherent plan. On October 8, students were informed of a mandatory emergency Zoom meeting with no explanation of its purpose. On October 9, Residential Life acknowledged student frustration and uncertainty, but provided limited clarity about the relocation process. On October 14, the university released an FAQ stating that Phase 3 residents could remain in their apartments until November. Yet only days later, students received new assignments and instructions that contradicted this information. The rapid shift in messaging left students unsure of their status, their timeline, and their next steps.

Contradictory communication defined this crisis. Some students were told they were part of Phase 3 and would not need to move until the end of the semester. Others received relocation instructions with less than forty-eight hours' notice. In my case, the Housing Director explicitly told me I would remain in my apartment until November because I had not received the earlier relocation email. Days later, I received a new assignment and an Emergency Relocation Order requiring me to vacate my apartment by October 22. These contradictions created instability and undermined confidence in the institution's ability to manage the crisis responsibly.

The use of informal communication channels further contributed to the confusion. On October 19, Residential Life staff sent a GroupMe message instructing students to prepare for relocation. GroupMe is not an official platform for communicating critical housing decisions, and its use for such purposes reflects a lack of coordination and professionalism. Students were left to interpret messages that varied in tone, urgency, and accuracy, often without the context needed to make informed decisions about their housing and academic responsibilities.

The Emergency Relocation Order issued on October 20 introduced a new and troubling element: coercive language. The order stated that "**access to affected residence will be restricted after the vacate deadline"** and that **"students remaining in the affected Dillard University residence beyond the stated deadline will be subjected to disciplinary action in accordance with university policies."** This language was alarming to students who were already experiencing anxiety and uncertainty. Threatening disciplinary action during a crisis caused by institutional negligence is inappropriate and harmful. Students pay between $35,000 and $45,000 per year to attend Dillard University, and they should not face punitive language when seeking clarity and stability in their living arrangements.

These communication failures directly affected student trust, stability, and academic focus. Seniors preparing for graduate school, students managing demanding course loads, and residents with personal or health-related concerns had to navigate conflicting instructions while trying to meet their academic responsibilities. The lack of clear communication created fear and instability, making it difficult for students to focus on their studies or feel secure in their living spaces. Taken together, these failures show a need for significant improvement in crisis communication and leadership accountability.

Section 6: Presidential Department Efforts

During the height of this housing crisis, the President of Dillard University was publicly listed as a finalist for the presidency of another institution. The university did not communicate this information to students, faculty, or staff, yet it circulated through official public channels outside the university. The timing of this revelation has raised serious concerns about the stability and commitment of institutional leadership during a moment when students were seeking clarity, reassurance, and decisive action.

The discovery that the president is actively pursuing another presidency while students are being relocated, threatened with disciplinary action, and placed in unsafe living conditions has deeply affected student trust. It suggests that the highest levels of leadership may not have been fully present or fully invested in managing the crisis that unfolded on this campus. Students are navigating contradictory instructions, sudden deadlines, and unsafe housing assignments, all while the institution's chief executive is simultaneously engaged in a process to leave the university.

This is not a matter of personal opinion. It is a matter of governance. Leadership transitions significantly affect an institution's stability, direction, and morale. Pursuing such a transition during an active crisis, without transparency or communication, signals a disconnect between leadership priorities and student welfare. Students deserve leaders who are fully committed to addressing urgent safety concerns, communicating clearly, and guiding the institution through difficult moments. Pursuing another presidency during this crisis undermines confidence in the administration's ability to provide that leadership.

This revelation is a turning point. It clarifies why communication feels inconsistent, why decisions seem rushed, and why the administration did not address student concerns with the urgency they required. It also reinforces the belief that this crisis is not being managed with the attention and care students deserved. The Board of Trustees must recognize that leadership instability at the highest level has eroded trust and must consider this when evaluating the institution's response to the housing crisis and, overall, the presidency.

Section 7: Formal Student Demands

This section presents clear, actionable steps the Board of Trustees must take in response to the housing crisis and the leadership instability that has affected students across the university. These demands are not made lightly. They arise from documented failures in communication, safety, and administrative decision-making, and they reflect the urgent need for accountability and structural change. Students deserve to live in safe environments, receive accurate information, and be led by individuals who are fully committed to their well-being. The following demands outline the steps needed to restore trust and protect Dillard University's integrity.

The first demand is to immediately pause all relocations until the university completes a full structural assessment of every residential building. Students have been moved into rooms with mold, ventilation issues, and structural concerns, including spaces previously marked offline. Relocation cannot continue until the university can guarantee that every assigned room meets basic safety and habitability standards. A pause is necessary to prevent further harm and ensure decisions are based on verified information rather than urgency or administrative pressure.

The second demand is that the university honor the November timeline that was communicated to Phase 3 residents. Students were told they would not need to move until November, and many relied on that information when planning their academic schedules, work commitments, and personal responsibilities. The sudden reversal of this timeline created confusion and instability. Honoring the original timeline is not only fair; it is essential to institutional integrity. Students should not be penalized for trusting the information university leadership gave them.

The third demand is a comprehensive structural and contractual investigation of all residential buildings. An external, independent entity must conduct this investigation to ensure transparency and accuracy. The conditions documented in Gentilly Gardens, Williams Hall, Hartzell Hall, and other facilities indicate systemic issues that temporary fixes or internal assessments alone cannot address. Students deserve to know that their living environments are safe, and the university must commit to a thorough review of its housing infrastructure.

The fourth demand is that the university not place any student in a room previously marked offline or identified as unsafe. Relocating students into compromised spaces undermines the purpose of relocation and places them at greater risk. The university must establish a clear protocol for evaluating rooms before assigning them to students, and it must remove any space that does not meet safety standards from occupancy until it is fully repaired.

The fifth demand is accountability for leadership failures. The president’s pursuit of another presidency during this crisis, combined with the current chief operating officer, Nereida C. Washington's, long-standing neglect of residential facilities, has eroded student trust. The Board must evaluate these leaders' actions and decisions and determine whether they upheld their

responsibilities to the institution. Accountability is essential to restore confidence and ensure future crises are managed with transparency and care.

The sixth demand is to establish transparent communication protocols. Students must receive information through official channels, with clear timelines, consistent messaging, and explanations that reflect the seriousness of the situation. Informal messages, contradictory instructions, and last-minute notices cannot continue. The university must commit to communication practices that respect students as stakeholders and provide them with the clarity they need to navigate their academic and personal responsibilities.

We make these demands in good faith and with the belief that Dillard University can rise to meet this moment. Students are not adversaries of the institution; we are its heart. We ask the Board of Trustees to take these steps not only to address the current crisis, but to strengthen the university's future and uphold the values that define our community.