



8 Strategies for **Attracting & Retaining** **A+ Student Residents**



Student housing operators are competing in one of the most expectation-heavy environments the industry has ever seen.

Today's students grew up with technology that anticipates needs, simplifies decisions and delivers information instantly.

This is a generation that can split rent, organize dinner plans, schedule appointments, FaceTime their friends and fall into a three-hour TikTok rabbit hole before most people finish their morning coffee. Naturally, their expectations for convenience and responsiveness are high.

Student housing properties are being judged against those same standards, which is why **communities can't just sell space, they need to sell experiences.**

Everything is being scrutinized.

- ➔ How quickly teams respond when students need help.
- ➔ Whether the leasing process feels organized or unnecessarily stressful.
- ➔ If communication feels helpful, clear and consistent.
- ➔ How the property handles stressful moments like move-in week.
- ➔ Whether amenities actually improve day-to-day student life.

At the same time, **student housing teams are expected to deliver highly responsive, resident-first experiences with limited bandwidth and growing pressure.**

That's exactly why [WithMe](#) and [Student Housing Insight](#) brought together a panel of seasoned industry leaders for a very real conversation about the needs and expectations of modern students. The result?

Eight effective strategies for attracting and retaining A+ student residents!



#1

Slow down the leasing experience for first-time renters.

Signing a lease is **one of the first major adult decisions** a student will make.

Being digitally fluent doesn't automatically make them confident renters. For many students, this is their **first time handling lease agreements, guarantor requirements, renter responsibilities, roommate coordination, and move-in logistics**. And for some parents, this is also unfamiliar territory.

Student housing teams that **slow down the leasing process create stronger first impressions**, especially for Gen Z renters who value clear, straightforward communication and international students who are adjusting to unfamiliar housing systems and expectations.

Some communities have seen **tours stretch beyond 90 minutes**, which is **exactly why educational resources and proactive communication matter so much**.



Be prepared to answer questions. Lots of them.

Students and parents are going to ask dozens of questions throughout the leasing and move-in process. Most of them boil down to four things.

Eliminating financial surprises.

- What am I actually paying?
- When is it due?
- What fees should I expect?

Removing the guesswork.

- What happens after I sign?
- What do I need to do before move-in?

Reducing uncertainty.

- Who do I contact if I have questions?
- Am I missing anything important?

Building confidence early.

- Am I making the right decision?
- Is everything under control?

Leverage technology to improve efficiency and offer great service.

AI-powered tools like [EliseAI](#) can schedule in-person and virtual tours, answer student housing-specific questions, and share unit features. After move-in, the software can track work orders, answer questions about amenities and reservations, and update residents on payment status, including co-signers.

Platforms like [Moved](#) integrate with property management software like [Entrata](#) to help track resident progress and verify that key move-in requirements, like guarantor approvals and renters insurance, have been completed before arrival.



8 FOOLPROOF WAYS TO IMPRESS FIRST-TIME RENTERS

- ✓ Give them an educational guide that explains what they should know before signing a lease (even if it's not at your property).
- ✓ Ensure you have thoughtful and detailed FAQs on your website.
- ✓ Provide clear guarantor communication and fee calculators.
- ✓ Send detailed move-in checklists and timelines.
- ✓ Communicate in a way that sounds human instead of overly corporate.
- ✓ Translate all of your resources for international students.
- ✓ Offer consistent follow-up before move-in day.
- ✓ Leverage AI-powered chat tools, like [Funnel](#), that answer common leasing questions around the clock.

#2

Overcommunicate (seriously).

Students can track their Starbucks order, stalk their Uber Eats driver and get Amazon package locations in real time. They're going to notice when leasing teams go from highly communicative during their tour to impossible to reach afterward.



Nearly **two-thirds of Gen Z renters** say digital leasing experiences and app-based communication now influence where they live.

They want staff to be accessible, information to be organized and updates to be easy to find without digging through dozens of old emails.

Communities are responding by creating more consistent touchpoints throughout the leasing and move-in process.

- ➔ Follow-up communication after tours.
- ➔ Parent and guarantor updates.
- ➔ Move-in reminders and timelines.
- ➔ Text message updates.
- ➔ AI chat support for quick answers to standard questions.

For stressed-out students and parents, responsiveness is reassurance.



#3

Set standards **early**.

Every student housing community quickly develops its own social norms. And unless the goal is recreating Lord of the Flies, those standards need to be established early.

Once certain **habits start becoming part of the culture**, they're hard to reverse.

A resident blasting music at 2 a.m. turns into multiple noise complaints. A few students trashing shared spaces eventually makes everyone care a little less about keeping them clean. **One unresolved issue can sour the experience for residents who were otherwise happy living there.**

It's critical **to set expectations clearly and early** through resident handbooks, move-in resources, guest policies, amenity guidelines and consistent communication.

Students don't want strict rulebooks taped to every wall, but they'd all agree they don't want the shared kitchen looking like a crime scene or finding someone's week-old leftovers growing sentence in the community fridge.

And honestly, **students usually respond well to structure** when it feels clear, reasonable, and consistently enforced.

Many residents are living away from home for the first time. They're still figuring out how to coexist with roommates and neighbors while sharing common spaces without driving each other insane.

The communities that function best **set standards early** before frustration, resentment and passive aggressive GroupMe messages start taking over.

#4

Offer international students more than just a warm welcome.

International students are adjusting to far more than just a new apartment. They're also adapting to unfamiliar housing systems, different social norms, new communication styles and sometimes an entirely different language.

And **for many of them, student housing becomes one of their very first impressions of life in a new country**, which is why clarity and community matter so much.

How can you best support them?

Research the challenges they face through resources like [Latitudes](#) from The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Translate leasing materials into native languages.

Hire multilingual staff members.

Help students build rapport with their peers and the leasing team.

Create move-in resources written with international students in mind.

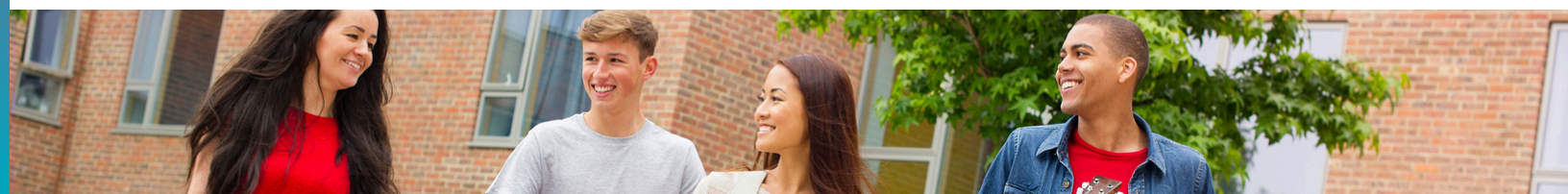
Communicate through platforms they already use, such as [WeChat](#).

Provide transportation options to and beyond campus.

Partner with international student organizations on campus.

Organize social events to prevent students from isolating in their units.

These small details matter, and they **shape trust in your community**.



Include a safety guide in your international student **welcome materials**.

It's highly unlikely that your international students will be familiar with common safety practices, local emergency procedures, transportation systems and campus resources. Providing a simple safety guide during move-in can **help students feel more confident and supported**.

SAFETY TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Keep all doors and windows locked at all times, even when you're home.

Don't let strangers follow you into your apartment building (aka "tailgating"). Never hold the door for someone you don't know.

Avoid distracted walking, like staring at your phone or wearing noise-canceling headphones. Be aware of your surroundings.

Stick to well-lit, populated areas, and never walk alone at night.

Never leave a beverage unattended at a bar or party.

Never share your banking information, tax identification number or passwords with anyone.





#5

Thoughtfully manage your online reputation.

Today's students aren't casually apartment hunting. They're searching for housing the same way they research everything else in life: **obsessively, digitally and with at least six tabs open.**

Before a student ever reaches out to a property, they've already...

- ➔ Read every Google review they could find.
- ➔ Searched the property name on Reddit.
- ➔ Watched apartment tours on TikTok or YouTube.
- ➔ Sent screenshots in group chats for second opinions.
- ➔ Asked upperclassmen where they'd never live again.
- ➔ Used AI-powered search tools to quickly summarize resident feedback.

By the time students schedule a tour, they're **validating what they've already learned about the community online.**

Gen Z renters trust peer validation far more than polished marketing language. A student talking about their actual experience will almost always carry more weight than a perfectly curated property website. The same is true for international students, who **rely heavily on reviews and testimonials from residents** with similar backgrounds and experiences.



That makes **online reviews one of the most influential marketing assets a student housing community can have.**

The challenge is that positive resident experiences don't automatically become positive online reputations. Every community has happy residents, but happy residents don't always leave a review. Residents with a negative experience, on the other hand, are often much more motivated to share their opinions publicly.

To generate more five-star reviews, ask at moments when resident satisfaction is already high, such as after a successful move-in, a quickly resolved maintenance request, a well-attended resident event, or a renewal signing. The goal isn't to manufacture positive feedback, but to **create opportunities for satisfied residents to share their experiences.**

As more students turn to tools like Google and ChatGPT to research housing options, operators should also regularly monitor the information that appears when their property is searched. **Outdated reviews, inaccurate listings and old property information can sometimes resurface in AI-generated responses.**

Maintaining accurate property information, encouraging authentic resident reviews and using verified review platforms like [StudentCrowd](#) can help communities **improve how they appear in both Google search results and AI-generated responses.**



WHERE AND HOW TO MANAGE YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION



Google Reviews →

Respond consistently, professionally and like an actual human being.



Student Crowd and other student-specific review platforms →

Track and identify recurring patterns in student complaints.



Google search results and AI-powered search tools →

Keep property information accurate and strengthen positive review volume across platforms.



Resident testimonials and peer recommendations →

Prioritize specific, believable resident experiences over generic marketing quotes.



TikTok, Reddit and social media conversations →

Pay attention to how students are organically talking about your property online.



Marketing vs. actual resident experience →

Make sure the on-site experience actually lives up to the content, photos and promises made online.

#6

Start move-in planning earlier than you think you need to.

Move-in week is basically a live stress test for the entire property, and **if a community feels calm, it's usually because the team started preparing months earlier.**

The best time to start? Spring.

Many student housing operators treat move-in with the same level of importance as property turns because they know how much is riding on those first few days. **Late transitions or last-minute takeovers can hurt the resident experience, which hurts brand reputation.**

By the time summer arrives, students and parents aren't looking for more information. They're looking for signs that the community is ready for them.



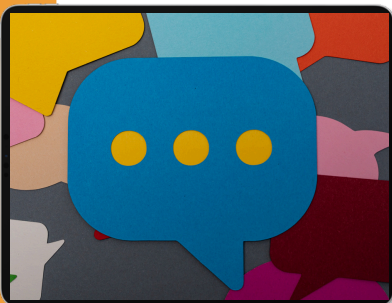
Put these strategies into practice in the spring, and you'll thank yourself when August rolls around.



Create move-in and move-out websites.

Students shouldn't have to dig through a dozen emails to find move-in information. Instead, create dedicated websites or landing pages that serves as central hubs for everything residents need for move-in and move-out. Include essentials like downloadable forms, parking instructions, Wi-Fi information, schedules, timelines, FAQs and procedures. The easier it is for students and parents to find answers, the fewer last-minute questions your team will need to handle.

A well-organized move-in experience alone can generate a surprisingly significant number of positive reviews. That's strong return from residents who haven't even finished unpacking.



Communicate early and often.

Communication should ramp up one to two months before move-in. Many operators have found it can take 10 to 12 touchpoints before important information truly sticks.

Move-in reminders, text updates, guarantor communications, timelines, and checklist progress updates help build excitement, reduce anxiety, and minimize the flood of questions that typically arise on move-in day.



Plan for the unexpected.

Before move-in season begins, walk through potential scenarios with your team to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

- Think through move-in day step-by-step.
- Identify potential bottlenecks.
- Review lessons learned from previous years.
- Refine processes and team coordination.

Move-in day may only last a few hours, but the impression it leaves can last an entire lease term. Make it count.



Obsess over unit readiness.

Move-in satisfaction is [directly tied to unit condition](#).

Even when students rated staff a perfect 10/10, poor unit condition significantly lowered their likelihood to recommend the property afterward.

The lesson? Walk the units. Then walk them again.

A missed paint touch-up, dirty floor or maintenance issue can overshadow months of communication and preparation.

If there's one move-in lesson worth remembering, it's this:
sparkle, sparkle, sparkle.

#7

Offer amenities that students actually use on a regular basis.

The **student housing amenities** arms race has gotten a little ridiculous.

Now, every property is frantically installing golf simulators, saunas, and creator spaces in a desperate attempt to “go viral” on TikTok. Even though they look impressive on social media, **students care far more about having access to amenities they’ll actually use.**

Study Spaces

Students are spending more time studying inside their communities than they used to. Quiet spaces with good lighting, comfortable seating and room to spread out will do wonders for students’ productivity during stressful weeks.

Electrical Outlets

Nothing brings a study session to an abrupt end faster than realizing the nearest outlet is 14 feet away and already occupied by three phone chargers and a dying MacBook.





Wellness Support

Between being away from home and the stress that accompanies college life, students need amenities and services that support their emotional, physical and mental well-being. Fitness centers open 24/7. Green space. Social events. Biophilic design elements. Shared spaces for social interaction.



Reliable Wi-Fi

This one is a given. Students expect the Wi-Fi to work seamlessly and reliably, especially when online lectures, streaming, gaming, FaceTime, and group project meetings are all competing for bandwidth at the exact same time.



Caffeine

Let's be honest. College students run on coffee. But the last thing they want to do is leave the building to get their caffeine fix, especially during busy weeks when time, money, and energy all feel limited.

Fully managed amenities like **SipWithMe** deliver barista-quality beverages for students while helping staff keep the coffee flowing effortlessly through auto-shipped supplies, real-time machine monitoring, live support, all-inclusive pricing and usage analytics.



Hassle-Free Printing

Printing is still one of the **most consistently used amenities in student housing**, but residents don't want the hassle of owning their own machine, walking to campus, or driving to Staples. They want a shared service that's quick, secure and available whenever they need it.

Fully managed solutions like **PrintWithMe** make life better for everyone by offering students the instant gratification of self-serve, secure wireless printing and supporting staff with proactive monitoring, automated supply shipments, and live support available 7 days a week.

#8

Use move-in day to create emotional momentum.

During move-in, students are overwhelmed. Parents are emotional. Someone's trying to transport an entire semester's worth of belongings in one trip while roommates are negotiating who gets which side of the room.

Small moments of hospitality can completely change the energy of the day.

An iced coffee after hauling boxes in August heat? **Memorable.**

A snack station in the lobby after a long drive? **Memorable.**

A team member who treats stressed-out students and parents like actual humans instead of logistical obstacles? **Extremely memorable.**

These little moments **create emotional momentum early**. Move-in day is usually the first time residents experience the property as a real home instead of just a building, which is why **small moments carry immense weight**.

TIPS FOR MAKING MOVE-IN MEMORABLE

- ➡ Hand out "essentials" kits that include snacks, water, toiletries and cleaning supplies.
- ➡ Have food trucks parked outside during peak arrival windows.
- ➡ Make sure your coffee bar is fully stocked.
- ➡ Create photo opps to give parents a keepsake they can treasure forever.

None of this needs to feel overproduced or wildly expensive. **Students just want to feel like the community expected them and was genuinely excited for them to arrive.**

Years later, residents won't remember every operational detail from move-in day, but **they'll remember if the experience was welcoming or not.**



WithMe

Today's students aren't just choosing where they sleep. They're choosing where they'll study, recharge, socialize, stress out, celebrate, procrastinate, caffeinate and attempt to survive finals week.

You won't win students over with a massive marketing budget. You'll **win them over by creating a living experience that actually supports their lives once the semester gets messy, exhausting, emotional and real.**



Eventually, every student housing community gets summarized in one brutally honest **word-of-mouth recommendation**. You want yours to be glowing.

RESOURCE ROUND-UP

A full list of the tools and resources featured in this guide that can help you **improve leasing, communication, move-in and move-out processes** and the **overall resident experience**.



LATITUDES NEWSLETTER

International student trends, research and higher education insights.

WECHAT

Communication platform popular with international students.



STUDENTCROWD

STUDENTCROWD

Student reviews that influence housing decisions.

FUNNEL

AI leasing support available around the clock.

FUNNEL

Elise^{AI}

ELISEAI

Personalized leasing conversations powered by AI.

MOVED

Technology-powered move-in planning and resident preparation.

moved.

entrata

ENTRATA

Student housing operations and leasing management platform.



About WithMe, Inc.

WithMe, Inc. is a leading technology-enabled amenities platform powering multiple services across shared living and working environments. Through PrintWithMe and SipWithMe, WithMe transforms everyday essentials like printing and coffee into a unified, fully managed experience that delivers convenience and reliability for users while reducing operational friction and bringing predictable cost and effort to on-site teams.



PrintWithMe, available in thousands of locations nationwide, is a fully managed printing solution designed for shared environments, delivering secure, wireless, self-serve printing for users alongside reliable, high-performance printing for on-site teams. The platform combines enterprise-grade print management software, connected devices, and ongoing service to ensure consistent performance with minimal operational lift.



SipWithMe is a fully managed coffee amenity designed for shared living and working environments. It combines high-performance machines, fresh craft-roasted coffee, and proactive service into a single, connected system that delivers a consistent, barista-quality experience without adding operational complexity for on-site teams.



WithMe works with **90% of the NMHC Top 50 Managers** and has earned a spot on the **Inc. 5000 list** for five consecutive years. In 2025, WithMe was also ranked #10 on **Crain's Chicago Business Fast 50**, and PrintWithMe was named **Coworking Innovation of the Year** in the PropTech Breakthrough Awards.

Learn more at **withme.com**.