

What is West AJ?

West Ambler Johnston (WAJ, West AJ), is one of the two Residential Colleges on campus and is the largest in the world! The first question that arises when describing West AJ is “What is a Residential College?” At Virginia Tech Residential Colleges are one of the four types of Living Learning Communities, along with Academic Major Learning Communities, Enhanced-Learning Communities, and Themed Housing. Living Learning Communities are designed to give students academic and social opportunities that are not found in standard dormitories. These unique environments provide closer interaction with faculty and other students, promoting increased interaction and involvement with both the building’s community and the University’s community. Among Living Learning Communities Residential Colleges are multigenerational and multidisciplinary, aiming to unite students of all ages, from freshmen to graduate students, with faculty. Residential Colleges are guided by a live-in Faculty Principle and a student life coordinator from Student Affairs, the college is also attended to by a number of Faculty and Staff, termed Senior Fellows. West AJ, in particular, follows the “Oxford Model” for Residential Colleges. This means that West AJ is organized into 4 houses: Hickory, Hawthorne, Holly and Honey Locust, each with around 200 students, or Junior Fellows, one live-in Graduate student, or Graduate Residential Fellow (GRF), and one Associate Faculty Principle. The building itself has been designed to facilitate interactions between students and faculty, including classrooms, game rooms, a library, gym, kitchen and movie theater. The goal of West AJ as a Residential College is for students to “know and be known” to each other and to the faculty of the college. We want students to engage in the diverse social and intellectual environment that prospers here and allows residents to engage in the educational experience beyond the classroom.



First and foremost, residential colleges at Ambler Johnston are places where students belong,

learn, and give. These multi-disciplinary, first-year through graduate level living-learning communities, thriving with meaningful and sustained relationships among faculty, staff, students, and the worlds they pursue together, promote rich intellectual, cultural, and social context where students "know and are known." The residential colleges seek self-motivated, lifelong learners, with diverse interests, who will build a community of scholars in the spirit of Virginia Tech's motto, Ut Prosim.

Making the Most of Life in West AJ:

1) Attend your first event! Probably a kick-off event, this will be your first experience with the WAJ community. This event will help shape how you perceive the identity of your house, as well as introduce you to the unique community it forms.



Hickory House: the winning team of the 2013 House Cup Kick Off

2) Attend a Faculty Tea! The cornerstone of WAJ is Living and Learning, and nothing connects

the residents of WAJ with the faculty and guests that support it like the Faculty Teas. Teas are a great way to meet faculty with common interests and discuss topics with experts in a particular field.



Tea in the Faculty Principal's Apartment with Arun Ghandi

3) Get to know your house. Attend house council meetings and say Hi to your RAs. Another great way to meet people in your house is to attend house dinners at D2 on Thursdays. Your house will be your central community at WAJ and it's important to connect with your house-mates.



Students engaging with the Faculty Principal at House Dinner

4) Get involved in the House Points competition. The healthy sense of rivalry helps keep the houses of WAJ on their toes.



The WAJ website with the points counter and flame that identifies the leading house

- 5) Go to a Town Hall. Twice a month the College Cabinet holds an open meeting for questions and answer sessions, this is the best way to get to know how the WAJ government runs.
- 6) Host your own event! Try suggesting an event idea to your house government or just make a Facebook post on your house page and see who turns up.
- 7) Run for government! There is no better way to make yourself a part of this community than to make yourself a part of the government that holds the community together.



Hickory House Council literally holding the community together during teamwork training

Glossary

Associate Faculty Principal (AFP) - The faculty member that guides each house, they are the bridge between students in the house and the faculty outside the college.

College Cabinet - The student run, faculty overseen body that makes up the government of the building, entrusted with budgeting, policy, student conduct, and organizational decisions for the college.

Faculty Principal - The head of the college, the Faculty Principal lives in the West AJ Principal apartment. Tasked with overseeing the College Cabinet the Faculty Principal is the core of the community.

Faculty Tea - A weekly gathering in the Faculty Principal's apartment with another faculty member, community leader, or other person of note. Past teas have been host to a myriad of guest speakers from Arun Ghandi to West AJ raised entrepreneurs.

Graduate Residential Fellow (GRF) - A live-in Graduate student that helps their house organize events and provide Junior Fellows with the wisdom gained from their greater experience.

House - The four smaller communities within West AJ: Hickory, Holly, Hawthorne and Honey Locust. Each house has around 200 junior fellows, one GRF, one AFP and a governing house council.

House Council - The governing body of each house. Each House Council is constructed differently but is designed to interface effectively with the College Cabinet. The House Councils control their house's budget and plan events for the house.

House Cup Competition - A year-long competition pitting the houses against each other in a number of special events, community involvement and volunteer service, and sports. Each action defined by the college's house points doctrine is awarded points towards victory in the competition. At the end of the year the house with the most points wins the House Cup.

Junior Fellow - The students living in West Ambler Johnston.

Living Learning Community (LLC) - Dormitory Communities designed to offer unique opportunities, both socially and academically. LLCs are intended to get the student more involved in their college experience.

Oxford Model - The model for Residential Colleges that the college at West AJ follows. The Oxford Model prescribes four houses with a mixture of student and faculty oversight for each house.

Residential College - At Virginia Tech they are multigenerational and multidisciplinary campus communities where students live together with graduate students and faculty members. The residential colleges are led by a Faculty Principal and a student life coordinator from the Division of Student Affairs, as well as a host of faculty and Senior Fellows who mentor students.

Senior Fellow - The faculty members who have volunteered to help enrich the community at West AJ through their time and effort, dedicating their expertise in their respective fields toward Faculty Teas or other events and their time toward interacting with the Junior Fellows in informal ways.