

By Riley Cochran

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When I first came to Utah State University in the fall of 2014, I didn't know how important living on campus would be! Making friends and hanging out with your next-door neighbors just gives you lots more things to do. There are always activities on the quad or at the student center. There's always something going on. You have everything right there, and it's an easier way to get into college life than living off campus.

I lived in Building E of the LLC—the Living & Learning Community. The LLC is made up of apartments that have four bedrooms arranged around a living room and kitchen area. There are common areas on every floor. I shared a room with another Aggies Elevated student, but we had six other roommates who were just regular Aggies.



Riley and one of his roommates

Having all those roommates was fun. We liked the same kind of things, especially the second year. We were all basically gamers—most of my roommates played video games and we always got along. It was a cool experience for me

because I had never had roommates. I was out on my own and not at my mom's house. It was exciting.

I never had problems with the roommates because I have disabilities. If anything, they were willing to help out because I have a disability. During the first semester, I had a paper that I had to turn in by 6 a.m. one morning for a health and wellness class. One of my roommates also had a paper to write, and he helped me. We stayed up all night and we both turned in our papers at 5 a.m. I ended up not sleeping that night! But I got my paper done, and I got a passing grade on it.



Riley & friends on USU's Block A monument

There are so many different personalities in a place like the LLC, and you get to experience a different atmosphere than the one you grew up in. You have people who belong to your church and people who don't. You get to see different cultures. I thought it was interesting to meet so many people who are so different from me.

I didn't have any bad experiences living in the apartment. There were the occasional times when people would leave their dishes in the sink for a week. It's a typical roommate thing, nothing that I got upset over or got in a fight with anybody. I just washed the dishes myself.

I joined the Residence Hall Association as a representative from Building E during my second year. During my first year, everyone told me how much fun it was and that I should volunteer, so I made it a goal for my second year. We met every week and planned one to two events each month that would be fun for the community. We planned events around holidays,

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like Halloween and Christmas and Valentine’s Day, and had games and treats. We had Casino Night and collected donations for cancer research during Relay for Life. That was cool because the LLC RHA collected more donations than any of the other residence halls on campus.

RHA members also went to a conference at another college campus. It was a great event that taught us new ways to prepare activities for our communities. Most of the panels had at least one USU student, because we had the biggest group. I went to five or six presentations. I didn’t go to ones that my fellow RHA members were presenting at because I wanted to learn as much as I could.



Riley and his roommate Troy with USU’s mascot, Big Blue.

I wanted to come to Utah State University before Aggies Elevated was even formed, because one of my teachers came to USU. I liked it because it was in Utah, but not Salt Lake City, where I’m from. Pictures of the campus looked pretty cool, and then I came for orientation and I was hooked. It’s big, but there’s a calm, peaceful atmosphere here. You can have quiet when you want quiet and loudness when you want loudness. It makes a difference when you’re studying. You can go to the quad or Old Main or the library where you can study and feel like you’re getting something accomplished. I have that personality that if it’s not quiet, I can’t get things done, and if there’s somebody around I’m going to talk to them.

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When we graduated, it was hard for me to let it go. I enjoy learning about new things and I think I could be one of those students who would stay here forever! But I have lots of great memories, and good friends.

For more information about Aggies Elevated, visit www.aggieelevated.com

Author Information

Riley Cochran, 21, graduated with the first cohort of Aggies Elevated students at Utah State University in May 2016. He is living in an off-campus apartment with a roommate and getting additional on-the-job training at Deseret Industries. He plans to continue to take classes at USU.