SENATE RESOLUTION #2139

Title: A Call for Trustee Intervention in Rising On-Campus Living Expenses

Date: February 20, 2006

Authors: Senator Chollak; Student-at-Large Chollak

Sponsors: Senators Chollak, McNiven, Wilson

1. WHEREAS, the University of Wyoming is an institution which has a well
deserved reputation for excellence in academics; and

2. WHEREAS, compared to many other institutions, UW has worked hard to
keep tuition rates low; and

3. WHEREAS, tuition is just one component of the total cost of school; and

4. WHEREAS, the cost of housing and board has increased a total of 24% over
the past 5 years; and

5. WHEREAS, the average national inflation rate for similar costs of living has
been 2.2% over the same time period; and

6. WHEREAS, student aid is not always adjustable to meet these rising costs;
and

7. WHEREAS, a 2003 study commissioned by the city of Laramie shows the
community to offer some of the state’s most expensive cost of living while at
the same time offering some of the lowest wages available (see Addendum
A); and

8. WHEREAS, a comparison of similar university communities shows how the
ability of students to pay their own way while in school varies from

9. community to community (see Addendum B); and
WHEREAS, these factors have combined to create a situation where many
students must seek public assistance in order to pay their way through
school; and
WHEREAS, this reality has created a situation whereby the taxpayers of
Wyoming are being charged twice due to the fact they pay for the bulk of the
costs associated with the University and at the same time must subsidize many
of the students who live there through public assistance programs; and
WHEREAS, the same conditions have contributed to creating a drain on
available public assistance to those living in poverty in the Laramie
community, but who are not inside the University community; and
WHEREAS, the River Village community was created in the 1900’s in an
effort to provide more housing for the growing numbers of families attending
the university; and
WHEREAS, many families have been pushed out of that community because
of the ever rising costs of the facility; and
WHEREAS, many international students do not enjoy the option of moving
off campus because they do not possess certain rental requirements such as a
Social Security Number or references from previous landlords; and
WHEREAS, the solution has been to make these properties available to
single students as well as families leave for more affordable housing units;

and
WHEREAS, many of these families have sought assistance through Public
Housing and Section 8 programs; and
WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the Cheyenne Housing Authority’s Debbie
Stamm (see Addendum C) that University Apartments are ineligible to
qualify for these programs because they are considered to already be
subsidized by the state through appropriations to the University, regardless
of the fact that they are self-sustaining; and
WHEREAS, even if Cheyenne Housing were to reverse their decision in this
matter, these units would cost too much to be eligible for the program; and
WHEREAS, Residence Life and Dining Services has been working to
upgrade the residence halls to make them comparable to similar facilities at
comparable institutions; and
WHEREAS, these renovations are actually having the affect of reducing the
number of available on-campus units; and
WHEREAS, while these upgrades are being made, the Summit View
Complex is over 50 years old; and
WHEREAS, many of these units use utilities inefficiently because they were
built with little or no insulation, their windows and doors do not seal
properly and other complaints which have not been fully addressed; and
WHEREAS, rising utility costs are being blamed for the bulk of the
increase; and
WHEREAS, many of these concerns were raised during the last major room
and board increase in 2001; and
WHEREAS, many of those concerns have been ignored or delayed; and
WHEREAS, according to statements made by Ms. Beth McCuskey,
65. Director of Residence Life and Dining Services (RLDS) to the Non-
66. Traditional Student Council during a January meeting, no concrete plans
67. exist to replace the Summit View units, and nothing beyond minimal
68. maintenance is expected to be committed, because of their profitability to
69. the department; and
70. WHEREAS, Ms. McCuskey admits the high profitability of the Summit View
71. complex is a major part of the funding for renovations in other areas of
72. RLDS; and
73. WHEREAS, much of the blame for this reality is due in part to a philosophy
74. enacted by the University Board of Trustees to make certain departments self
75. sustaining; and
76. WHEREAS, RLDS is called upon to provide services above and beyond the
77. requirements of private landlords including large support staffs, dozens of
78. student employees, programming for younger students and a range of services
79. not found in other housing complexes; and
80. WHEREAS, such conditions put the University at not only a competitive
81. advantage, they place the University in the position of having to charge more
82. to sustain such services; and
83. WHEREAS, despite these conditions imposed by previous Boards of
84. Trustees, RLDS holds a current reserve account of $3 million; and
85. WHEREAS, the bond debt for the River Village complex will expire in
86. 2007; and
87. WHEREAS, this will bring a significant influx of funds into the coffers of
WHEREAS, no evaluation of alternative sources of funding for RLDS appears to have been conducted other than raising the rates of the customers who use these services; and

WHEREAS, the University of Wyoming has sought capital facilities funding for other projects on campus with great success, but student living facilities have not been included in recent requests; and

WHEREAS, at a January meeting of the Board of Trustees, Chris Boswell, Chief of Staff to Governor Dave Freudenthal, suggested the university pursue this avenue for funding other university needs; and

WHEREAS, it would seem that an evaluation considering the possibility of increasing energy efficiency, the effectiveness of services provided and their related costs, a reasonable period of input for student comment, and other areas which are under the control of RLDS should be conducted before student costs are increased; and

WHEREAS, all of these concerns have been previously shared with various administrators, but with little action being taken in their regard; and

WHEREAS, “The purpose of the Student Government of the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming is to serve our fellow students in the best manner possible through accurate representation, professional interaction with campus programs and organizations, and responsible, effective leadership.” (ASUW Mission Statement, Rules and Procedures, Article II, Section 1.B); and
WHEREAS, ASUW believes it to be imprudent to involve the Board of
Trustees in trivial matters; and
WHEREAS, this particular issue has the potential to affect the lives of the
students who attend UW and will influence the choices students make in their
higher education.
THEREFORE, be it resolved that ASUW calls upon the UW Board of
Trustees to reject the portion of the 2006-2007 fee book pertaining to
increases in room and board; and
THEREFORE, be it further resolved that an evaluation of the Department of
Residence Life and Dining Services be conducted to consider areas where
inefficiencies may exist and how they can be addressed; and
THEREFORE, be it further resolved that the University of Wyoming
reevaluate its philosophy of charging department to be self-sufficient,
particularly when those departments are forced into a position of charging
students a burdensome rate in order to continue their services; and
THEREFORE, be it further resolved that the UW Board of Trustees consider
the possibility of seeking funding for new and upgraded on-campus housing
from the Wyoming State Legislature.

Referred to: _______________ by another

Date of Passage: _________________________ Signed: _________________________

"Being enacted on _________________________, I do hereby sign my name hereto
and approve this Senate action."

______________________________
ASUW President
Debbie,

I am following up on our phone call of 11/28/2005. Thank you for your information on Section 8 funding. As President of the Non-Traditional Student Council, I am following up on an inquiry from students as to why they cannot use Section 8 funding for University of Wyoming owned apartments.

Many families who live in University Apartments while waiting for section 8 funding are forced to move their families off campus when their section 8 funding comes through. There is some concern that the University simply does not accept Section 8 funding, even if the apartment is cost eligible. The University has responded to our request to accept section 8 by stating that the CHA has deemed the University as ineligible to receive funding for the reasons outlined in the email attached.

The apartments I am referring to are regular multifamily buildings that have a variety of designs including 2-3 bedroom townhouses, multilevel 8 plexes, and single story apartments. All apartments include kitchens and private baths. Here is the link to the main page of the University Apartments website http://uwadminweb.uwyo.edu/reslife%2DDdining/Apartments/default.asp. If you look at the map and the floor plans, you can see that these are regular apartments and not dormitories.

Is there another reason why these are ineligible to receive Section 8 funds?
Your clarification on this matter would be very helpful.

Thank you,
Jene’ Chollak
President
Non-Traditional Student Council
at the University of Wyoming

From: Nerlene Chollak [mailto:chollakj@yahoo.com]
Sent: Mon 11/28/2005 11:55 AM
To: Nerlene Jene Chollak
Subject: Re: Section 8 Funds

Dave Hennings <Hennings@uwyo.edu> wrote:

Jene,

In response to your question about Section 8 Housing Vouchers, I contacted the Cheyenne Housing Authority (307)634-7947 for clarification. They affirmed the State interpretation of following federal regulations includes on-campus apartments as "dormitories", and are thus ineligible housing for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. This is consistent with information I received following my inquiry about five years previously. CHA staff told me they received notification last Friday that additional language further clarifying § 982.352 is being distributed to HUD offices, and they agreed to send me a copy once it is available to them.

Beth is presently out of the office for a couple of weeks, and will be able to respond to questions following her return.

I will see you at the next non-trad council meeting.
PART 982—SECTION 8 TENANT BASED ASSISTANCE: HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

Subpart A

§ 982.3 HUD

§ 982.352 Eligible housing

(a) Ineligible housing. The following types of housing may not be assisted by a PHA in the tenant-based programs:

(4) College or other school dormitories