

# **RESIDENCE LIFE & DINING SERVICES**

## **Unit Plan: 2009 - 2014**

### **Department Mission**

*Acting as an integral and supportive component of the Division of Student Affairs, the Department of Residence Life & Dining Services creates an inclusive customer-service oriented living and dining environment by providing a safe, clean, and healthy educational setting that fosters academic and personal growth. Serving a diverse audience comprised of students, families, campus community members, and guests, the department is committed to furthering the goals of the University of Wyoming.*

Residence Life & Dining Services is comprised of two separate departments linked together in its efforts to support residential students. The two departments join with the Wyoming Union to create a cluster of auxiliary units within the Division of Student Affairs with a primary focus upon student engagement and learning. Additional responsibilities of the cluster include supporting the broader Division of Student Affairs' student learning and assessment initiatives. This planning document will also focus on these initiatives.

### **Prior Planning Period**

*Facilities:* Orr Hall renovations were completed in this planning cycle and The UW Board of Trustees has approved four fee increases toward future construction projects, identified in the 2004 Support Services Plan to be White Hall. Despite a fairly aggressive approach to building a funding stream, the cost of White Hall has doubled since first budgeted at \$16M in 2002. Campus leadership is exploring other funding approaches to complete the residence hall renovation projects within the next five to seven years.

Campus apartments were a facility consideration addressed in the last Student Affairs Support Plan. In 2003 when the Housing Plan was vetted, University Administration supported the concept of waiting until 2007 (at the earliest) to demolish Summit View Apartments so that their revenue stream could continue to support the River Village debt service. Summit View's replacement possibilities are currently considerations for the Long Range Development Plan. Apartments have received significant investment during the last planning cycle including Landmark Square windows and roofs, and Spanish Walk roofs and doors.

*Student Learning:* The last planning cycle included several elements focused on student learning including assessing learning communities identified in the Academic Plan. Efforts to focus on learning communities included significant assessments within Synergy. FIG data was last produced by OIA in 2004, due to problems with the BANNER transition, but is currently being generated for the Higher Learning Commission reports. Additional assessments have taken place through the University's administration of the NSSE survey.

Action items in the Student Affairs Support Services Plan included focusing on academic support at the University Apartments, which through a partnership with IT, included providing internet access to apartments and investing in a computer lab. Another action item suggested creating new learning communities, which was fulfilled in part with the evolution of new FIG groups, and supporting both a Health Sciences House and the new Honors House.

### Relevant Institutional Issues

The following items addressed in Creation of the Future 3 (CF3) are relevant foundations for Residence Life and/or the student engagement and learning functions within the division:

- Housing facility upgrades are specifically mentioned as a priority. CF3 calls for the creation of a university housing plan and identifies the conflicting demands of competitive accommodations and maintaining a reasonable cost of attendance.
- CF3 also acknowledges the long-range development process taking place, the importance of a transportation plan, and focuses upon sustainable building operations.
- Student success items include supporting non-traditional and distance students, establishment of a best practices symposium for assessment of student learning, developing a first year and transfer student transitions program, and supporting students who have not declared majors. The document also supports the premise that planning items may come forward from the accreditation process.
- A focus on inclusion discusses greater internationalization initiatives and partnerships with HBCU's.
- CF3 discusses the importance of building the Honors Program.
- The student learning that takes place within SLCE was highlighted and linkages with the curricular structure were identified as a possibility in the future.
- Finally, CF3 suggested that co-curricular areas of distinction be identified and supported.

### Action Items

*Residence Hall Facilities:* A sound residential program adds to the vibrancy of an institution. Research has shown that students who live in residence halls are far more likely to be retained and graduate. Unfortunately, UW falls short of its peers with residence hall space. All UW living space was configured in the 1960's, and our students typically share a small bedroom with another student, and a restroom with the rest of their wing. Today's students demand more privacy than our residence halls provide, and they are getting it elsewhere. Our peer institutions, including our community college colleagues in the state, have recognized this need and have taken steps to provide the types of accommodations that students today require. In recognition of these concerns, a residence hall plan was recently proposed. This plan will remodel Downey Hall in its traditional configuration, reconfigure White Hall to suites, and replace Hill and Crane Halls with suite-type spaces. This plan is expensive—estimated at \$100 Million to complete. Asking residence hall students to pay for these renovations is not feasible. *It will cost every residence hall student \$3,800 per year in additional room and board fees for the next 20 years to cover the debt necessary to complete this plan.*

A housing plan must also acknowledge that residential students must have some “skin in the game.” That is, their fees must also include funding for facility rehabilitation. Our proposal suggests that room and board fees include a component that funds the major maintenance formula applied to residence hall space. Currently, this amount approximates \$1.2 Million per year. Major maintenance dollars will be applied to building systems just as they are throughout the rest of campus.

*Apartment Facilities:* The Long Range Development Process currently includes a component to explore the feasibility of demolishing all, and replacing a portion of Summit View Apartments. The consultants will conduct a series of focus groups, interpret two separate housing marketing surveys (conducted in 2001 and 2006), and provide expertise regarding public private partnerships. Part of their analysis will be to also explore the management approach currently used for the remaining apartment complexes to suggest strategies to improve operating efficiency.

While the academic linkages between residence halls and student success have been well-documented, these connections to on-campus apartments are less clear. While apartments may or may not directly impact student learning, they do provide a valuable service to the community. Part of the consultant's exploration will be to determine which sub-populations are currently being served by the apartments and will need to be served in the future. Some of these populations include our international students, families, graduate students, and students with short-term leasing needs. Our research has shown that the biggest reason students live in UW apartments is cost. This premise will be factored into the planning efforts.

*Academic Integration within the Residence Halls:* New construction enables rethinking the residential program model to further develop linkages with academic affairs. Campuses have developed extensive partnerships that can include faculty-in-residence programs, classroom or practice facilities, faculty office space, freshman-sophomore learning communities, and facilities dedicated to particular academic programs, including honors programs. As UW explores ways to improve undergraduate engagement and learning, facility planning efforts will need to include these broader conversations.

*Sustainability:* Sustainable building operations will be a consideration with all renovations and new construction. Additionally, through recently creating a graduate assistant position dedicated to sustainability, the department is exploring greater program initiatives within the residence halls such as improved recycling initiatives, and programs to reduce energy consumption.

*First-Year Programming:* Summit 2009 is being designed to support student engagement. The program is a partnership between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and provides opportunities for new students to develop an understanding of the campus culture and the local community. New students will arrive on campus on Thursday prior to the start of fall classes to participate in a series of activities with faculty and peer leaders. The activities are designed to help them understand the differences between high school and college. Assessment of the various components of Summit 2009 will be crucial as efforts continue to improve first-year programs.

One of the premises of Summit 2009 is that students will be in a cohort throughout their experience. After the first year, efforts will continue to focus these cohorts throughout at least their first semester in a learning community model. In the cases where these cohorts are curricularly based, such as with FIGS, a system already exists for learning to continue throughout the semester. We are also exploring co-curricular learning communities, where students will be part of a community with defined learning outcomes that are not curricularly based. Assessment will take place to determine the effectiveness of these different models.

Another effort that will be piloted next year is course-blocking, or pre-building a portion of the student schedule for incoming students. This fall, departments will be identified to partner in a pilot project of blocking courses for first-year students. If the pilot is successful, this model may be used for a large percentage of incoming students.

Because 85-90% of the incoming first-year class typically lives in the residence halls, outreach to this group can be very effective. Strategies to reach the remaining 10-15% of first year students, still a sizable population, will be explored.

Overall, first year programming may be one possibility to consider for a co-curricular area of distinction.

*Sophomore Engagement:* Once the first year programs are solidified, it makes sense to explore strategies to improve the sophomore experience. Literature suggests that intentionally designed programs for sophomores can improve student success. This may be a point to explore when looking at

how to connect the Hill and Crane replacements to academic programs. One component may be to create a two-year residential program with an academic component that to engage students in their first and second years.

*Inclusion and Internationalization:* Continued efforts to build relationships abroad can lead to more opportunities for students to visit other countries and learn from their cultures. National NSSE data suggests that even short duration trips can have a profound impact upon student engagement and learning. Seeking opportunities for student visits or exchanges will be a priority this planning period. Additionally, as UW seeks to build relationships with HBCU's, there may also be opportunities for student exchanges, joint service projects, or other programs.

*Assessment of Student Learning:* It will continue to be important to focus on student learning initiatives within the Division of Student Affairs. As the departmental plans evolve with a student learning focus, directors will see how their existing programs support learning and will also likely create new opportunities for learning to take place. During the next planning cycle, it will be important to explore the divisional learning outcomes vis á vis the goals of the University Studies Program and to seek additional ways in which the division can partner with Academic Affairs to provide out-of-classroom linkages to classroom activities.

### **Timeline**

Several of the initiatives described above have definitive dates or sequencing. Others not specifically noted below will begin immediately.

#### *2009-10*

Begin phased demolition of Summit View Apartments  
Begin construction for Summit View Replacement  
Launch Summit 2008  
Complete design for White Hall and seek funding  
Begin major maintenance spending in residence halls  
Pilot project to block courses for new freshmen in select programs  
Pilot approaches to reach out to off-campus freshmen

#### *2010-11*

Begin blocking courses for new students in most areas (if pilot successful)  
Summit 2010 to have a learning community component  
Complete apartment construction and Summit View demolition  
Begin construction on White Hall  
Revise/complete plan for Downey Hall and seek funding  
Begin conversations regarding Hill/Crane replacement and academic programming

#### *2011-12*

Downey renovation takes place  
Hill and Crane Replacement plans completed and funding sought  
Sophomore engagement programs developed and refined

#### *2012-13*

Hill and Crane replacements begin (two year phased project)

