

10 January 2008

Architecture Program

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Dr. William E. Porter
Dean of Students
800 Wilder Tower
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RE: Housing and Academic Collaboration Award

Dear Dr. Porter:

I am pleased to submit this letter in support of the nomination of the University of Memphis for the Housing and Academic Collaboration Award from the Southeastern Association of Housing Officers. In my capacity as a faculty member and advisor to the residents of the Architecture living-learning communities, I have had several opportunities to experience first-hand the strong collaboration between Residence Life and various academic units, particularly Architecture.

In February 2005, we submitted a response to the RFP for a new Living-Learning Community proposal. Architecture and Foreign Languages were approved, thus initiating a very important and beneficial program. From the beginning, the Residence Life staff worked closely with me and our faculty members in designing what would be the ideal space for our students. The creation of fully-equipped design studios on the ground floor of Architecture House is unique, and while outside the norm for university residences, was fully embraced by Associate Dean Danny Armitage and others at Residence Life. Soon after recruiting women to occupy the House, we had a strong demand from male students for a similar residence facility, which was provided almost immediately across the parking lot from the women. Architecture TownHouse is now home to five male architecture students.

As a result of these two houses being made available, we have noticed significant enhancements to the educational experiences of our students. In virtually every major event we have scheduled at Architecture House, I am pleased to say Residence Life offered to be involved and helped to ensure the success of the events. Several of these are detailed below.

Special Events and Activities: The first of these, other than the opening reception, was a project in the first year course Introduction to Architecture which I teach. Several students chose a site adjacent to the houses and we selected a panel of prominent local architects and designers to critique the work in Architecture House. The result was a wonderful experience for the students as each of the panel members offered advice and constructive criticism while literally being able to see the project site through the windows. In addition, two honors students in the class made a special video focusing on Architecture House. They presented their work to students, faculty, Residence Life administrators, Dr. Rosie Bingham, Vice President Student Affairs, and a local newspaper reporter. The *Commercial Appeal* ran a large feature story soon afterwards and focused on the collaboration among all parties and the benefits to the students coming from the partnership between Residence Life and Architecture. Residence Life has also hosted and catered the annual Architecture Awards Reception held at Architecture House.

TBR: In December 2007, the Tennessee Board of Regents met in Memphis. One of the activities on the agenda was a dialogue between selected architecture faculty, students, and civic partners and the members of the Board. While the overall event was quite successful, of particular importance was the live video link between the TBR meeting space and Architecture House. All of the residents were assembled in the House and were able to communicate with the Board, discussing the value of living in the houses and the importance of being involved in special community activities.

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Academics: Another way in which the importance of the collaboration is demonstrated is through the enhanced academic experience enjoyed by the residents of the living-learning communities. We have noticed an increase in the esprit de corps of the students, the quality of their work, and their overall academic competence. By working together, the students help one another regardless of academic year classification. This is especially noticeable in the work being done by first year students who have the benefit of second and third year students helping and offering advice. Most of the residents are either in the University Honors Program or the Architecture Honors Program, or both, or are eligible.

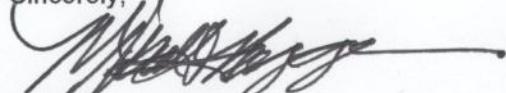
Memphis In May Student Affairs Conference 2007 (Engaging the Millennial Learner: Strategies for Involving, Teaching and Retaining Tomorrow's Leaders): In this event, Architecture and Foreign Languages faculty worked with Residence Life and Student Affairs representatives to develop a presentation to discuss the many benefits of the Living-Learning Community concept and what is necessary for success. The involvement of students in special activities, particularly in "hands-on" projects in the community, has been a valuable recruitment and retention tool for Architecture.

Community Initiatives: The Architecture Program faculty and students are involved in a number of projects in the community. One project a year ago is indicative of the strong relationship between Architecture and Residence Life. Henry Turley, a prominent local developer, met with Architecture House residents as part of a regular event. He was so impressed with the concept, he asked me to develop a prototype for a private developer to build in partnership with the university. Second year students in my studio prepared several design schemes for Mr. Turley and he remains quite interested in the project. In addition to the architecture students, several students from City + Regional Planning were also involved creating a multi-disciplinary team. Danny Armitage and Peter Groenendyk were also involved and very helpful to the students during the design process.

In closing, I believe the partnership between Architecture and Residence Life has, in only a short period of time, resulted in an enhanced educational experience for our students and has certainly helped bring positive recognition to the University of Memphis. The efforts of Residence Life should be recognized for the positive contribution they bring to the campus experience.

Please feel free

Sincerely,



Michael D. Hagge, M.Arch
Architecture Program

cc: Mr. Danny Armitage, Associate Dean of Students