

January 10, 2008

Awards and Recognition Committee

Southeastern Association of Housing Officers

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing this letter to nominate my institution for ***The Housing and Academic Collaboration Award.*** This nomination is on behalf of the faculty and staff who developed our living learning communities, in collaboration with the Department of Residence Life, Dining Services, and Child Care Center at the University of Memphis. The following nomination provides information on the Request for Proposal (RFP), the selection, and the implementation of our new program.

During the Spring Semester of 2005 a committee involving faculty, the Provost’s Office, Student Affairs, and Residence Life developed an RFP that went to all faculty inviting them to compete for space in the new townhouse units that were being built and scheduled to open for fall 2006. The new townhouses consisted of an 8 to 9 bedrooms, traditional townhouse design with an additional 750 square feet of classroom space. The faculty was told that they had to submit proposals that would detail the following criteria:

1. The groups must have specifically scheduled academic activities within the facility.
2. The groups must address cultural, social and recreational needs of students within the facility.
3. The groups must have goals and objectives that are measurable
4. The groups must maintain 100% occupancy of the living space during the fall and spring semester and 4 beds during the summer.

The proposals were submitted to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Criteria that the selection committee looked at included a. Goals and objectives (30%), b. Financial support (25%), c. Addressing institutional priorities, and d. Plan for meeting the housing occupancy requirements (30%).

A number of academic departments showed interest in the space and/or submitted formal proposals for the space. These groups included: Architecture Program, Foreign Languages (International House), Engineering (Women in Engineering), Biology, Music, and Emerging Leaders. At the end of the selection process the space was allocated to the new “Architecture and Design House” and the new “International House.” These units, along with additional communities for Greeks and other student leaders were opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony that included the President of our University and the faculty members that had been involved in the development of the new programs.

**International House**

International House was developed as a language laboratory where a variety of students (foreign students, American students studying foreign languages, International Studies majors, foreign language tutors) could live and learn from one another. In addition, all students living in the house and additional students selected by the faculty would be required to take a class that would meet in the house. The class offered in the fall semester was on International Cinema, and the spring semester class was on International Etiquette. Other programs that occurred in the house included foreign language club meetings, programs like October Fest and Spanish Tables, and recruitment events where foreign language teachers from area high schools could visit. John Durbin, the faculty member responsible for International House has written a letter of support outlining many more of his programs and successes.

Residence Life furnished the classroom space with a meeting table, sofas, and a large screen TV. These furnishings provided the flexibility to utilize the space for meetings, programs, and classroom activities.

**Architecture and Design House**

Architecture took a different perspective on their classroom space. They asked that we not carpet the space (leave the concrete bare); they proposed that we not put sheetrock on the walls (we could not accommodate that request); and they did not want furniture. Instead of furniture they installed drafting tables. Every Architecture student living in the house has a studio right where they live, where faculty assist them with their work, visiting architects have done talks and critiques, and where they have 24 hour access to work on their projects. The program has been an overwhelming success. Michael Hagge is the faculty member responsible for the Architecture program and the House. His letter of support outlines the programs, projects and assessments that have made this house a huge success, one that was featured during the annual Tennessee Board of Regents meeting via live remote from the house this fall. The Board of Regents got to see via the internet students working on projects while faculty talked about their program and how the Living Learning Community has worked.

The success of this process has resulted in numerous institutions coming to Memphis to tour our facilities. We have had additional request for information on the development of this program from architects and institutions around the country. I hope this letter helps to explain why we feel the process we used for the development of our program (RFP), the Faculty ownership, and the results are unique to both Living Learning Communities and a fantastic example of how Student Affairs can collaborate in a meaningful way with faculty. Please feel free to contact me at 901-678-2295 if I can answer any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Peter Groenendyk

Associate Director

Residence Life, Dining Services and

The Child Development Center

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