January 11, 2008

I am honored to nominate the exceptional implementation of the Living Learning Communities at the University of Memphis and the successful collaboration between Residence Life and Academic Affairs for the SEAHO Housing and Academic Collaboration Award. Mr. Danny Armitage, Associate Dean of Students, Residence Life, Dining Services and Child Development Center and his team are true visionaries in developing outstanding partnerships and collaborations with various constituencies that have enhanced student’s educational experiences through expanded academic, social and professional development activities. The mission statement for the Division of Student Affairs is, “Students Learning Through Engagement & Learning,” and Danny and his team are the epitome of the cohesive bond we have built with Academic Affairs in the pursuit of delivering high quality cutting-edge programs and services that promote and enhance student learning. Through these unique, integrated home and studio environments, we are able to offer residents of the Living Learning Communities the framework to build leadership and shape intellectual and ethical development.

With the establishment of the Living Learning Communities in Foreign Languages and Architecture, academic department chairs, deans and the Vice Provost office have been instrumental in identifying the programs to target. One of the most unique aspects of our Living Learning program is that the project began with the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of Students (Danny Armitage) co-chairing a committee to receive and review Requests for Proposals (RFP’s) from faculty who were interested in developing the academic aspects of a Living Learning Community. This process ensured a particularly strong collaboration between Academic Affairs and students that has lead to high functioning Living Learning Communities. We have been able to utilize the expertise of professional architects in presenting real-life, community and regional problems for the students to address. We have also developed close ties with a professional architectural organization that is providing funds for community development. Recently our Architecture students participated in a Q & A session with the Tennessee Board of Regents via a live internet connection. The students who gathered in the Living Learning studio section for the classroom meeting were very forthcoming about the benefits of the collaboration between the academic community and residence/student life leadership. The Regents were impressed with what they saw and the conviction of the students involved. Student retention in the Living Learning Communities has exceeded our expectations and residents are achieving high placement rates upon graduation.

We currently have other academic areas that are extremely interested in participating in Living Learning Communities and as our housing capacities allow we intend to expand upon our initial Living Learning Community model. These communities have greatly increased our students’ sense of belonging and enjoyment of the university experience. I am appreciative of the innovation and collaborative efforts between Residence Life and Dining Services, Student Life and Academic Affairs who have focused their initiative on student success.

Sincerely,

Rosie Phillips Bingham

Vice President for Student Affairs