

Survey finds dorms very satisfactory

By Deb Pederson
Senior Reporter

The UNL residence hall occupancy rate for this year as of June was up by about 143 contracts from last year, Housing Director Doug Zatechka said.

Assistant Housing Director Guriana Wittstruck said the rate is still up with new contracts coming in faster than cancellations.

Overall, general satisfaction with the residence halls is up and positive, according to a survey conducted last spring.

The survey was the fourth in the past five years, according to Zatechka, who said that results of the survey indicate that the university is "doing a very good job" in responding to the needs and wishes of students living in residence halls.

The survey was based on the responses of 258 students who returned questionnaires sent to a random sample of 696 students at the end of the 1984-85 school year. Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of residence hall living on a scale of 1 to 5, with

responses toward the lower end of the scale indicating higher satisfaction with particular residence hall services. From the total number of responses, a mean score (the score at the middle of the total range of scores on each question) was calculated.

Several reasons contribute to the residence halls' popularity, including the development of special interest floors, location, services, cost and security, Wittstruck said.

Each complex will have an upperclassmen floor this fall, she said. Selleck will host a non-traditional student floor for older students returning to school. Abel will have a mentoring/wellness floor where freshmen are paired with upperclassmen on the mentoring half and the wellness half will center around activities promoting good health. The modern languages floor, where students practice a foreign language, and the international house, where American and foreign students are paired together, will both be offered again this fall.

"Next year we hope to have floors centered around broad academic areas,"

Wittstruck said. "Studies show when a homogeneous group lives together, they do better in their studies."

The survey indicated that the least satisfaction, although not strongly expressed, was towards the responsiveness of student government, and quietness on residence hall floors.

Zatechka said that the few areas of least satisfaction (three areas out of 35) were clustered in the middle, or neutral, range on the one to five scale. While these areas are not negative, but average, he wants attention focused on them.

"We want to be better than average in all areas in the opinion of students

living in our residence halls," Zatechka said.

"Statisticians tell me that responses in surveys such as this generally tend to cluster around the middle range. The fact that responses in our survey leaned toward the high satisfaction range in several areas, particularly in the 'general satisfaction' category, is especially pleasing."

The residence halls' services, such as meals, linen and housekeeping, also allow students to concentrate on studies, Wittstruck said. Each complex will eventually have a student computer room. And more study areas have been created in the halls, she said.

But the halls also provide study breaks in the form of social activities and recreational facilities like the Abel swimming pool, weightrooms and darkrooms, she said.

Living in the residence halls is cheaper than living off-campus when similar living conditions are compared, Wittstruck said.

Housing officials said that only about 10 percent of all crimes reported to UNL police occur in residence halls.

Because of the number of services and facilities and the location on campus, more students are choosing to live in the residence halls, Wittstruck said.

Rural water systems lack revenue

Customers of rural water systems are not paying the full economic cost of the water they receive, the Fifth World Congress on Water Resources in Brussels, Belgium heard in a report by a UNL agricultural economics professor.

Paul Gessaman said that as long as rural residents believe that water should be nearly free, or should be no more expensive than that supplied in municipalities, rural water systems will not be able to generate revenues that pay the total cost to supply water.

"It will take substantial infusions of public funds to keep these systems operating." The FmHA rural water system program goals of rural-urban parity and affordable cost may not be attainable, he said.

Gessaman researched 108 FmHA-funded systems in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, North and South Dakota and examined the physical, organizational and operational characteristics of rural water systems with major construction during the 1970s.

"Many systems were well managed and operated, but more than half had moderate to severe financial problems," he told the Water

Resources Congress. "Most problems were caused by inadequate revenues due to inappropriate water rates or customers' use of alternative water sources."

The FmHA Water and Waste Disposal System program has been the main source of funding for about 14,000 rural water systems throughout the United States. Objectives of the FmHA loan program are to provide basic human amenities, alleviation of health hazards and promotion of orderly growth in rural areas. Grant and loan funds are used to pay costs of distribution lines, wells, pumps and related facilities. And, under limited conditions, FmHA funding can be used to pay for rural water system renovation or to purchase existing systems.

Long-term objectives of the FmHA grants are:

- Maintaining sanitary and healthful living conditions in rural areas.
- Helping communities realize their full economic potential.
- Attaining urban-rural parity.
- Making rural water and sewer service affordable.

Gessaman reported rural water

systems provide potable or drinkable water to small rural communities, farms, rural businesses and non-farm residences scattered across the country with organizational units set up as water districts, cooperatives or non-profit corporations.

Total capital cost per customer varied from a low of \$977 for a small Missouri system to the high for a South Dakota system of about \$12,700.

Debt service payment schedules and actual debt service payment records from a sample of 21 systems were examined. Debt repayment varied from system to system with debt service payments of some systems being current, and others were up to 50 percent.

"The large number of rural water systems constructed throughout the United States under the FmHA Water and Waste Disposal System program gives clear evidence that the fundamental purpose of the program — to improve rural residents' access to adequate supplies of potable water — is being achieved at a reasonable level," Gessaman said. "However, the cost of that achievement may not be reasonable."

Summer commencement

Summer graduation ceremonies for 875 UNL seniors will be held Aug. 17 at 9:30 a.m. in the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

UNL Chancellor Martin Massengale will give the commencement address. Shirley Thomsen, assistant director

of UNL's records office said those seniors planning to attend the ceremonies and receive their diplomas, must have their commencement attendance forms handed in to the records office today. The forms are needed to assure the student of a seat and diploma at the ceremony.

Students...

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"We face a double-edged sword. Not only do we have to compete, but our costs are higher," he said, adding that enrollments have declined about 4 percent in the last two years.

"I don't think we can find any state where desegregation has worked well,"

said Joyce Payne, director of the American Association of State Land Grant Colleges and Universities' office for the advancement of public black colleges.

"A lot of that has to do with historic neglect. The majority of black land grant schools have never received adequate state money."

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