

Preparations crucial to dorm transition

By Krysia Maly

Staff writer

The first semester at college can create anticipation and anxiety for students and parents alike. For many students, this will be their first time living on their own. And for many, that means residence halls are in their future.

More than 4,500 students will live in UNL's residence halls this year, according to Douglas Zatechka, University Housing director. Approximately half of these residents will be first-year students.

Students are required to live in the halls their first year of school with the hopes that by doing so, the transition into college life will be smooth.

"There is research that proves that students that spend their first and second years of school on campus tend to get better grades, make a circle of friends, be more active on campus and form a sense of community," Zatechka said.

Students may not know what to expect when they walk into their residence hall for the first time. Resident assistants are upperclassmen prepared to help students become oriented on campus. Resident assistants sponsor educational and social programs as well as supervise individual floor governments. They also act as counselors and intermediaries between the students themselves and the resident director.

Safety

One of the biggest concerns for parents and students alike is safety. The residence halls take steps to ensure they are as safe as possible. Main desks in the lobby are open 24 hours a day. The university hires security officers to patrol the halls from approximately 11 p.m. until 7:30 a.m. There are alarms and video cameras for further safety. Resident assistants are also on duty at night to make sure the halls are safe.

Students may enter and leave the residence halls as they please, with a few restrictions. To enter the dorms past midnight, students must scan their student identification cards and sign in guests. Most halls have escort policies that require residents to escort non-residents up to their rooms.

Common sense is essential to preventing problems, said Tanya Neill, resident director of Sandoz Hall.

"Don't give out your phone number or address to people you don't know," she said.

"Always let the campus police or residence hall staff know of any problems you're having."

Students also must take responsibility for themselves and their belongings. Zatechka offered some safety tips students can follow to protect themselves and their property.

■ Lock your door when you are not in the room or sleeping. The vast majority of thefts happen because of unlocked doors.

■ Bring only what you need. University Police supplies engraving pens for valuable items, allowing for easy identification for stolen goods.

■ Check home-owners policies for theft protection in the residence halls.

■ Walk in groups at night.

One person should never walk alone. Students can call Campus Escort to walk them home if necessary.

■ Report strangers in the halls. Many dorms have a guest escort policy that requires all guests to be with a resident at all times. Students are encouraged to help enforce this policy.

Roommates

For many students, college is the first time they have had to share a room with another person, one who they might not even know. Before school starts, students are sent questionnaires to ascertain their likes and dislikes. A computer matches roommates together based on this information. Problems ultimately arise, even for the best-matched roommates.

"Ninety percent of roommate problems I see involve a lack of communication about expectations," said Neill.

Using items without permission and invading personal space are often causes of conflict between roommates. Other problems include times guests visit, noise disturbances and lack of communication between roommates.

"Communication is the key," said Esters. "People come from different backgrounds. They don't respond the same way. Roommates need to sit down and talk through their problems."

Students are asked to sign a roommate agreement at the beginning of the term. If there

are major conflicts between the roommates, they can refer to their agreement and talk their resident assistant or resident director for help resolving the conflict.

What to Bring

Students should bring items that reflect their personality and make their new living arrangement comfortable.

"Pictures of friends and family are great to bring because they are reminders of home," said Neill.

Standard items that students may want to bring with them include dry-erase boards, day-planners, alarm clocks, shower shoes, answering machines, plastic dishes, personal computers and desk organizers. Students should make arrangements with their roommates before they bring large furniture, microwaves, mini-fridges, stereos or televisions, as space is limited.

It may be wise to leave valuable items at home to prevent chance of theft. Candles should also be left at home, as they are not allowed in the residence halls.

It's important to realize you can't bring all your possessions, Neill said.

"There is no need to bring everything at once - you can always bring things later," she said.

Food Service

COLLEGE 101

- ◆ The majority of NU students call home once a week (usually to ask for money).
- ◆ The majority of NU students try to schedule classes after 11:30 a.m. (That 7:30 Spanish class no esta bien).
- ◆ The majority of NU students prefer shower shoes to fungus feet (Athlete's feet is not just a shoe store anymore).
- ◆ The majority of NU students know their social security number by heart (You are now a number... ha ha ha).
- ◆ The majority of NU students know that the rec center is a good place to meet members of the opposite sex (youuu feel my ahs?).
- ◆ The majority of NU students know the number for NU on Wheels, a free safe ride home (475-RIDE).
- ◆ The majority of NU students drink five or fewer drinks when they party, or don't drink at all (according to a 1999 survey of NU students).

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A major concern for students is what the food will be like. Food Services vary from dorm to dorm. All students are offered a 10-, 14- or 19-meal plan, depending on their needs. Hot and cold dishes are served buffet style, along with a soup and salad bar. Vegetarian meals are also available. Comment boxes are located in each cafeteria for students to communicate with food service. For students who

would rather eat in their rooms or on the way to class, grab-and-go boxes are available.

Homesickness

It's easy to feel lost at a large university, and as a result, students may begin to feel homesick. The best way to fight off homesickness is to get involved

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