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DESIGNS Make a Difference

by Bradford L. Angelini

Architecturally, the residence hall is becoming one of the most complex buildings on campus. As students arrive with very high expectations for their living environments, campus administrators are looking to the residence hall to supplement students' changing academic needs. And top-ranked colleges and universities are using new and better equipped residence halls as recruiting tools to attract the best students.

As institutions come to recognize the important role that student housing plays in the recruitment, retention, and successful transitions of their students, amenities and spaces for front-loaded academic support services (i.e., academic advising, tutoring, group study, classrooms, and faculty offices) are being included in facilities designed for new students. These spaces contribute to the academic success of new students and to the institution's academic mission by providing an informal, student-friendly environment that is also designed to support new approaches to teaching and learning.

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from the chapter "Residence Hall Architectural Design and the First-Year Experience," which appeared in the book Residence Life Programs and the New Student Experience [3rd edition], edited by William J. Zeller and published in cooperation with ACUHO-I and the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

(Lower left) Stockwell Hall at the University of Michigan.

(Lower and upper right) The patio off of the Union Drive Community Center at Iowa State University and a dining option from within.

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IOWA PHOTOS: REGGIE MORROW

THE CHANGING DEMANDS OF STUDENTS ARE DRIVING THE EVOLUTION OF RESIDENCE HALL ARCHITECTURE.

DESIGNING LEARNING SPACES

A number of factors drive residence hall design. One of the most important considerations in planning new construction or renovation projects is defining the learning and developmental outcomes that a residence hall should support. The architect can then offer suggestions about the amount of space, room proportions, and organization needed to complement the social and educational goals of the residence hall or residential community. For example, if the outcome is to increase student-faculty interaction, the design solution will provide spaces, either in the residence hall or in an adjacent area, where faculty and students will feel comfortable meeting. This can be a study lounge, a coffee shop, or space on the ground floor of the residence hall separate from living areas and with easy exterior access.

Another consideration is the growing role of technology. If there is one word that sums up today's generation, it is *connected*. Students maintain constant contact with friends and family through cell phones, instant messaging, and social networking sites; yet, as some college and university housing administrators fear, all this screen technology may replace personal, face-to-face contact, undermining the sense of community or of place. As students rely more and more on technology to communicate, socialize, research, and attend class, administrators are strategizing ways to increase the student-to-student and student-to-faculty contact that a

number of researchers suggests is necessary for academic success.

While not entirely unfounded, such concerns about the loss of personal contact may reflect a failure to understand the power of technology to keep this generation of students connected. Students are not necessarily sacrificing face time to stay connected electronically. A casual observation of food courts and coffee shops on campus shows that students are still gathering and interacting – often around the computer screen. As such, campuses need to provide the types of spaces where students can work together with the aid of the computer and monitors large enough for multiple viewers. These spaces can be available in residence halls or in a community center that is part of a living-learning neighborhood.

The shift toward reinforcing the academic role of residence life departments has created the need for more public space and for more formal and informal learning spaces in residence halls. A significant portion of the ground floor of new and renovated halls is now dominated by classrooms, computer rooms, faculty offices, student organization meeting spaces, seminar rooms, and multi-purpose gathering spaces. The ground floor can be used by the campus community for classes, services such as counseling and tutoring, and dining facilities. The upper, more private residence floors are also expanding their community spaces with a mix of small- and medium-sized meeting spaces and hallways made irregular by open spaces and offering exterior views.



REGGIE MORROW

The skylight at the Union Drive Community Center brings natural light into the main entrance.

A good example of this use of space is the new Honors Hall at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. The ground floor includes study lounges and multi-purpose rooms, a game room, a dining center, administrative offices, the residence director's apartment, and a residential wing. The upper floors have distinct living areas for 12-14 students and 12 lounges in varying shapes and sizes. Student lounges are open to the corridors so that hallways are shortened and are illuminated by natural light.

A focus on student- or learning-centered pedagogies has changed the size, number, arrangement, and mix of classroom types needed on a campus. Residence halls designed for living-learning programs can provide alternative classroom space in a student-friendly environment. Further, residence life departments can support the institution's academic mission by forming partnerships with academic departments and providing spaces for initiatives that use innovative pedagogies, such as learning communities.

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Honors Hall at the University of South Carolina received Gold LEED certification in December 2009.

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The Community Learning Center in Stockwell Hall at the University of Michigan is just one of the new amenities that the hall reopened with at the end of 2009.

At the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, each residence hall used to have a satellite library connected to the main campus library. These smaller libraries are now being converted into learning resource centers, which offer a variety of seating and technology options to enhance team learning, such as network connections for laptops and individual and group seating in soft chairs with tablets or in straight-backed chairs around rectangular or round tables. The area also features small, private rooms and low privacy walls to facilitate group work. This room provides the space, technology, and flexibility to support a variety of learning activities.

DESIGNING NEIGHBORHOODS

While residence life departments may be focused on increasing the academic impact of living spaces, students are demanding more amenities in their individual living spaces. As colleges and universities remodel older residence halls and build new ones to meet these demands, housing administrators may wonder if they are trading greater student satisfaction with living arrangements for decreased opportunities for community engagement. Thus, in the architectural planning of a residence

hall and a campus as a whole, purposeful design of residence halls, classrooms, and other public places has to create open spaces that are so inviting that students will want to leave their rooms. One way to accomplish this is to think of campus housing in terms of neighborhoods, as proposed by a group of campus housing professionals during the 21st Century Project Summit in 2006.

In this conception, a block is made up of approximately 30 students. A residence advisor lives on the block, knows each student by name, and acts as an advisor and confidant. Relationships among the block residents are face-to-face and on a first-name basis. There is also a limited amount of community space on the block, and its proximity to private spaces makes quiet study the most likely and acceptable activity. An occasional block party may be planned, and residents may engage in group activities such as intramural sports and may even have the same major and some of the same classes.

At the neighborhood level, the interaction is similar to that within a traditional residential neighborhood where residents share public spaces and amenities. The neighborhood is made up of approximately 150 students and also includes administrators and faculty. The common public spaces

may include public lobbies, dining facilities, a café, small retail shops, and postal facilities; the neighborhood also contains classrooms, computer labs, meeting spaces, and offices. Name and face recognition among residents of the neighborhood is high, and interactions are frequent. Local identity and loyalty is strong.

The Union Drive Neighborhood at Iowa State University in Ames is a good example of how a neighborhood can be created. A housing master plan produced for the campus determined that Hesler Hall, an older building with little architectural character and a long list of maintenance problems, should be demolished and replaced by three new halls. Friley Hall, a first-year hall housing 1,200 students, and an intramural athletics building would – along with the three new buildings – form the core of a first-year residential academic community designed to help ease the transition of students from a supportive home community to a campus where they know few, if any, people. A central dining hall/community center would also be constructed, the first building to be completed as part of the Union Drive Neighborhood.

The Union Drive Neighborhood now provides services in a single location: In addition to three new suite-style residence halls, spaces and programs are provided for academic advising, tutoring, study skills workshops, counseling, and academic classes. The new 58,000-square-foot community center provides multiple dining options including themed food stations with made-to-order dishes, a bakery, and a nonalcoholic sports bar. The community center also has a convenience store, game and exercise rooms, and a post office. A covered arcade at the base of the new residence halls and community

center unifies the buildings, which are arranged around a large open space that is in turn surrounded by a larger community of buildings.

The Hassayampa Academic Village at Arizona State University in Tempe is a 565,000-square-foot, 1,928-bed residential community that functions as a neighborhood. Its buildings anchor the southeast corner of the campus and are adjacent to the law school, the student recreation complex, the physical education building, and outdoor intramural sports fields. A cluster of five buildings completes a community of 980 students. Both four-story (housing 156-172 students) and seven-story (housing 246-308 students) buildings are part of the complex. The floor plans are C-shaped, double-loaded corridors. The student rooms are four-bed semi-suites or two rooms with a shared bathroom. Double suites, ADA accessible rooms,

and residence advisor rooms are distributed throughout the building. The room furniture is loftable, allowing students more options for personalizing the room arrangement.

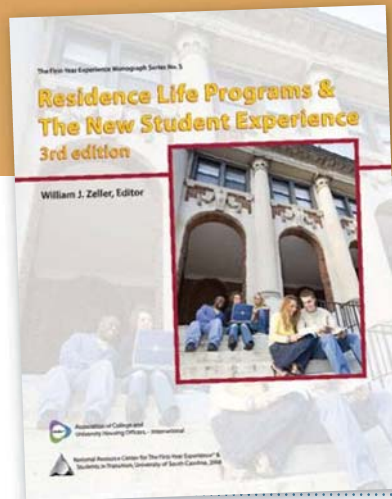
The public spaces in the residence halls are designed to support the three first-year living-learning communities for the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Living Well Residential Community. The Living Well Residential Community is well suited to this location, which is near the student recreation complex, the physical education building, and the outdoor intramural sports fields.

The spaces provided for these communities also include offices for on-site advising and preregistration, meeting spaces for community involvement with youth programs, and classrooms for education faculty seminars and workshops. Spaces are

also provided for on-site tutoring and peer mentoring, life skills workshops, ice cream socials, movie nights, and weekend pizza and barbecues as well as dinners with the dean. The activities take place in four-person study rooms, two-story community lounges, classrooms, tutoring facilities, coaching rooms, and conference rooms. The two-story community lounges feature kitchenettes, a television-viewing area, and wireless Internet. Because the lounges are open to two floors, the possibilities for community development are greatly expanded. The community also shares a dining facility, a central mail center, a UPS store, and a convenience store.

Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, has an interesting cluster of residence halls – the Bader Snyder Complex, built in the 1950s – and their unique design offers ideas that can be implemented in new residence hall

IN THE ACUHO-I ONLINE BOOKSTORE



Residence Life Programs & The New Student Experience (3rd Edition) William J. Zeller, Editor

A must-have for any residence life office, this updated edition looks at how recent things have changed – and stayed the same – in the work and mission of residence life programs over the past decades.

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Figure

IS THERE A "BEST" WAY TO CONFIGURE RESIDENCE HALL ROOMS?

The current housing types available for students vary widely as do the philosophies about the degree to which the housing experience should support educational objectives. Virtually all campus housing operations, though, share two common but seemingly conflicting goals: to build community and to offer residents privacy. So, the question remains, what is the best configuration to meet that goal for first-year students?

Traditional double: The traditional double is a simple box repeated in a line on both sides of a double-loaded corridor. This room type is the most efficient and cost-effective way to house students. There is no plumbing in the room; and the furniture, including the closets, is movable and can be configured in a number of ways. The beds can also be bunked. Because students are forced to use the public spaces and shared bathrooms, this type of hall is arguably the best layout for creating community among first-year students. This assessment was reinforced by a focus group of sophomores at Idaho State University in Pocatello, who were living in a new apartment-style hall but expressed their satisfaction in having lived in a traditional hall with a central shared bathroom during their first year because they would never have met so many people otherwise.

Suite-style: The adjoining suite-style room is made up of two double sleeping rooms, an entry/closet/vanity area, and a shower and toilet room shared by four students. Like a hotel room, the sleeping area is buffered from the corridor by the closet entry area, making it feel more private and reducing sound transmission. The furniture can be lofted to maximize floor space. The toilet and shower room is accessed by separate doors from the closet/vanity area, but this type of door-locking arrangement can be problematic for privacy and access. A better solution is to have separate shower and toilet rooms, each with privacy doors.

The adjoining suite-style is currently a very popular option for first-year residence halls, and some institutions are converting older halls to a similar configuration. Because the layout fits neatly in a rectangle, it can be used efficiently in buildings designed with double-loaded corridors. The shared room is not oversized, so students are inclined to use the building's public spaces, which encourages community building.

Single semi-suites: A single semi-suite is a cluster of four single rooms sharing a semi-private bathroom off a private corridor. Each room has a closet with shelves, a three-drawer chest, desk with study carrel and mobile pedestal with two file drawers, a wall-mounted corkboard, and a full-length mirror. The shared bathroom and hall help create smaller communities within larger residence halls.

As such, this design transitions well from a first-year only hall to one that can accommodate sophomores and juniors who want to remain on campus. For the amount of privacy provided, this is a very efficient plan that could be used in a double-loaded corridor or a cluster layout.

Apartments: Many campuses are adding apartment-style residence halls to their housing options. Some include two- and four-bedroom apartments designed to be in a double-loaded corridor or a cluster arrangement in a residence hall. The apartments feature stackable washer and dryer units and kitchens with full-size refrigerators, a cook top, double sink, and eating area. This hybrid apartment building offers students the privacy of apartment living with the convenience and safety of living in a residence hall on campus. The entrance to the building is centrally located on the ground floor near learning community amenities including a front desk, administrative and faculty offices, class and meeting rooms, lounges, and recreational spaces.

THE ANSWER?

Colleges and universities are feeling pressure to build apartment-style housing based on the demands of incoming students for more space and privacy; however, this is not an ideal model for first-year students where student-to-student interaction and the building of social communities are so important.

The 2005 ACUHO-I/EBI Resident Assessment confirmed this when it found that the number one factor for overall student satisfaction with the residence hall experience is the ability to interact with others in the hall. The overwhelming majority of chief housing officers responding to a similar survey believed that traditional housing with multiple occupants in one room is the most conducive living arrangement for interaction and engagement, and a large majority (76 percent) considered the single-occupancy apartment undesirable for interaction and engagement. However, these same chief housing officers felt that a single in the super suite was the best (82 percent) housing option for recruitment purposes while a traditional shared room was seen as a liability.

On each campus, the decision to build a particular hall and room type is based on the goals and objectives of the institution's administration. When planning first-year housing, the primary goal should be to create an environment that supports community through student-to-student interaction and public spaces that promote group and team learning. Combining smaller student rooms with semi-private spaces on each residential floor and public spaces on the ground floor is the best way to provide a balance between privacy and community.

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(Top) Staff, faculty, and students celebrate the opening of Honors Hall at the end of 2009. It is a coed facility that primarily houses students in the Honors College and the Magellan Explorers learning communities.

The atrium (center) and a student's room inside Stockwell Hall.

construction. The complex is made up of six two-story buildings, each housing 40 students for a total of 240 residents. The freestanding halls form an informal courtyard with a picnic shelter at the center. The basic floor plan is a "U" of rooms surrounding an interior rectangular community lounge with a centralized skylight. The residence hall is entered through a lobby at the narrow end of the community lounge. There are eight five-person suites, four on each floor. A residence advisor's room is located on the second floor of each building, and a residence director apartment is in one of the six buildings. Two of the halls have basements with a game room, computer lab, laundry, and storage.

While the design has some flaws based on today's standards, its strengths lie in its centralized two-story community space, the double/single room options, and the small-scale community identity. The community

lounge is ideally sized for 40 students to live and learn in a community: to hang out, have a class or meeting, or listen to guest speakers. In addition, students experience the open skylight space each time they come and go from their rooms.

The five-person suite provides opportunities for flexibility. The single room can be available for second-year students who are interested in staying in the halls and participating in the living-learning community environment. The ability to mix first- and second-year students in the living-learning community provides an opportunity for programming that is not possible with a first-year only class.

Having positive and frequent interactions with one's peer group is the number one indicator of student satisfaction with the living environment. While any successful residence hall design will facilitate student interactions and promote a

strong sense of community, a living environment designed specifically for first-year students also needs to provide academic and personal support, including programming for academic success, opportunities to meet new people and to make friends, and space to develop emotionally and become more independent. Providing spaces in and adjacent to residence halls where these interactions can occur both formally and informally is especially important when students are in a living-learning community with a single academic focus. The new emphasis on the residence hall as a community of learners is transforming the physical space of housing from a place removed from the classroom to a place that is the center of academic life and student success. **TS**

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