Committee on Student Life (CSL)
Friday, November 9, 2012
Room 12-196 12pm – 2pm
Minutes taken by Lisa Stagnone

Present:  Gunther Roland, Andy Barlow, Tali Feliciano, J. Meejin Yoon, Danielle Guichard Ashbrook, Jit Hin Tan, Betsy, Riley, Andrea Dubin, Oz Agar

Guests:  Randi Cabezas and Nathaniel Schafheimer from GSC HCA

Speakers:  Henry Humphreys, Senior Associate Dean, Residential Life and Dining and Peter Cummings, Senior Director, Finance and HR

The northwest corridor has the greatest amount of grad students residing in it. It has had the most growth for newly renovated and newest living areas. Housing for grads in the 1960’s totaled 1,100. Now it’s at 2,300 on campus. It’s doubled in the 2000’s.

The community itself has approximately 6,000 grad students (on and off campus). They are an engaged group of students. They run the buildings. They develop communities within these areas. Lounges are designed to bring people together for socializing. Bright, clean, open spaces were in mind during the design of each structure. Recreational areas are within the buildings for everyone to utilize. Each space has its’ own identity and all provide community.

House governances are encouraged. Students are provided the physical space however they decide what goes within the structures. The space is limited and they get creative on how to use what they have. It could be indoor or outdoor (rooftops and gardens). Some could contain shared cooking space, computer rooms for shared work areas. Some have laundry spaces; some have service desks (that can also be used as security check in spots).

As we renovate and design we are always thinking of the end-users needs. We are constantly upgrading systems and added what’s needed such as indoor bicycle space, music rooms and even workout rooms. We note that in the planned facilities upgrades (which include laundry, common area furnishings and security systems) Housing has indicated that residents will be solicited for their input. Comment that it may not have been the case previously such as the replacement of laundry machines with front-loaders instead of top loaders, which were not popular with users - appreciate that moving forward, resident input will be taken into account.

We recently renovated the pedestrian railroad crossing area by Vassar and Albany. We’ve revisited the residential life staffing in houses. And we’re constantly upgrading utilities such as laundry, common areas (furniture) and security systems.
One thing that we will hold consideration to it is the accelerated capital renewal report. It’s almost completed now. It will address aging residential facilities for both grad and under grad students.

At this time, there are no efforts to add beds to the system. If anything we are in the very early stages, if you wanted to say, regarding 2030. It doesn’t mean that we don’t want more housing. There is a need for more housing and family housing.

Some of these building are fifty years old. Does this mean they’ve reached their life cycle? Do we renovate? We need to keep in mind that disrupting students where they live will disrupt their studies at the Institute.

There is no target that we try to get to when it comes to housing grad students. A goal of housing 50% of graduate students was discussed in the early 1960’s. Today we have 6,000 grad students. In its’ time, the northwest corridor was developed for the grad housing students in mind. Many factors and sources that are variables from a market stand point need to be considered. Relocating the Ashdown community from its original W1 site to its current site at NW35 was done so due to the physical deterioration of the building and not due to market forces or the 50% target. Prevailing concept over the northwest quadrant became the ‘community’ it is today over the last ten years.

If you know of anyone interested in off-campus housing, Linda Patton can help them. Whether it’s new faculty, students both under and grad, she has the experience to assist you in your search. We do have some waiting lists for housing and it’s safe to say that the less your limitations, the sooner you will be placed.

Some places have the requirement that you need to move after a year unless you become an officer within the building, some don’t. It depends on where you live.

We are not making money off of the rent being charged. We are simply trying to get by. We have to pay the mortgages. In theory, the next buildings to be built for housing should pay for themselves, especially a new building. That would be ideal would be not to make a profit but have to cover the cost of the building.

What we’ve heard is that most grad students are happy with the community within their buildings. They are concerned about the stipends covering 50% of their rent. They understand that it may be cheaper off-site but not as safe. Most are enriched and have the opportunity to participate within the community if they chose so. So why do they leave? The leave because of the rent costs.

Single efficiencies go for about $1,200.00 per month. They are concerned that this will increase. The fear is that the people who will benefit from this type of community living will not be able to live there.
There are five areas of the Residential Life Budgets effecting rent:
Finance and mortgages
Support mechanisms (staffing)
Utilities
Amenities
Plan for the future

We’d like to consider applying some funding to the future plans of housing.

Are these rents market driven? What is the source and have we considered financial aid? We inherited these buildings (problems) from the 50’s and 60’s. We have to figure a way to help with these problems. One way could be to increase the rents to double digits for a few years to cover expenses but we don’t want to do that.

Rent vs. inflation? Grad students have 5% from a 3.5% increase. Inflation is 2.1 – 3.1%. It bounces around. Sometimes it’s not applicable to our situation. Increase debt service will level off in 2016. Paying more upfront and will level off to pay off debts. Grad stipends vary. It’s a 5K difference. Approximately 24K is the average but it doesn’t differentiate between masters and doctrine.

It’s easier to move off campus and get lower rents. However housing on campus is higher quality. Apart from all, we have a fairly happy graduate community who are all concerned over rent.

(presentation)
GRADUATE HOUSING
Graduate Housing Over the Years

1960s
1,150 beds*

EASTGATE
Unfurnished residence for 201 graduate students with families
-Opened in 1967

WESTGATE
Unfurnished residence with spaces for 208 graduate students with families
-Opened in 1963

ASHDOWN HOUSE (NW35)
Furnished coed residence for 541 single graduate students
-Opened in 2008

EDGERTON HOUSE
Unfurnished coed residence for 184 single graduate students
-Opened in 1990

SIDNEY - PACIFIC
Furnished coed residence for 681 single graduate students
-Opened in 2002

TANG HALL
Furnished coed residence for 404 single graduate students
-Opened in 2002

THE WAREHOUSE
Furnished coed residence for 120 single graduate students
-Opened in 2001

Present
2,300 beds

*includes Ashdown at W1site

November 9, 2012
Home to 2,300 Graduate Students
Community Spaces to Bring Students Together
Choices to meet student’s styles and budget
Services to meet student’s needs
Recent and Future Happenings in Graduate Life
Recent and Future Happenings in Graduate Life

- Pedestrian Railroad Crossing from Vassar to Albany Street
- Residential Life Staff
  - Capital Renewal
  - Management of Housing Operations, 24/7
- Planned facilities upgrades
  - Laundry Areas
  - Common area furnishings
  - Security systems
Accelerated Capital Renewal

MIT RESIDENTIAL LIFE & DINING
Dining  FSILG  FYE  Housing  RLP

November 9, 2012
Questions