

Annual report to: Interim Chancellor and Provost Garnett Stokes
Attention: Anna L. Ball, Michelle Marsden
From: Jeanne Abbott, chair, Residential Life and Campus Dining Committee



Date: June 8, 2017

The Residential Life serves to advise the vice chancellor on programs, services and policies regarding the residence halls, other University-recognized residences and dining facilities.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Residential Life and Campus Dining Committee met twice to hear Frankie Minor, director of Residential Life, outline plans for residential facilities and Julaine Kiehn, director of Campus Dining Services, discuss changes to the dining halls.

Faculty members of the committee are Marvin Feldman, Elizabeth Garrett, Deborah Gerhart, Catherine Gleason, Thomas Phillips, Mihail Popescu and Michael Volz.

Frankie Minor and Julaine Kiehn are ex-officio members. Both continue to face significant challenges because of budgetary constraints, fluctuating student enrollment projections and an unsettled campus climate. All of this affects students living in campus facilities and is compounded by ever-changing housing and dining preferences. Both Frankie and Julaine should again be recognized for their close attention to the needs of their constituencies, as well as to the demands and restrictions imposed, out of necessity, on their operations.

Reports from staff at the meetings each semester covered these points:

- Campus Dining Services reported that sales are lower in residential dining halls because of a drop in students, but retail sales are up through programs such as Gold Cash.
- The Gold Cash program gives faculty and staff a 10% discount on meals in campus dining facilities. Accounts can be set up through payroll deduction or by depositing funds. It is a popular program but has not been widely marketed — and should be.
- Dining Services has also found favor with its Tiger Plan for off-campus students. Depending upon choices, up to 63% can be saved on food prices through the plan. The Tiger Plan 350 costs \$800 per semester; the Tiger Plan 630 costs \$1,530 per semester, and both offer a scale of cost-savings, again depending on food choices. The plan can be used at any of the 21 campus dining locations.
- As part of the Dobbs renovation, seven new dining facilities called The Restaurants at Southwest will open in August 2017: Legacy Grill (burgers and fries, quesadillas, nachos); 1839 Kitchen (roisserie chicken and other comfort foods); 1+5+3 Salads and Soups; Olive & Oil (Mediterranean and pasta); Tiger Avenue Deli; Truffles (desserts); and a Starbucks outlet.
- Hours and options will be adjusted in the fall at Baja Grill and Mark on 5th to meet declining revenue projections.

- Residential Life continues to work through profound occupancy issues with the size of the freshman class projected to be down 23%, costing the division \$21 million. The issue is a need to rearrange services while still meeting institutional obligations, and raising rates can make residence halls less attractive to students.
- Among the efforts to meet the deficiency are closing more residence halls and marketing the remaining facilities to a wider group of students. In the past, facilities were dedicated almost entirely to freshmen, but transfer students are now welcome, as well as upperclass students and graduate students.
- Because past projections were based on stable enrollment, the impact has been severe on the Residential Life division. Over time, the division has taken on \$400 million in debt, and the loss of income means 50% of the division's budget is used to pay off the debt.
- Seven residence halls will be closed in 2017-18 to maintain an acceptable rate of occupancy: Center, Discovery, Excellence, McDavid, Respect, Responsibility, Schurz and Tiger Reserve. These will remain open for undergraduates: Brooks, College Avenue, Defoe-Graham, Dogwood, Galena, Gateway, Gillett, Hatch, Hawthorn, Hudson, Johnston, Mark Twain, New Hall, North, South and Wolpers halls.
- The division has been adopting a variety of creative solutions to offer and fill space, including use for conferences and guest housing, providing space to academic departments (Engineering) in residence halls (McDavid) and continuing to explore solutions to graduate and family housing.
- Wider marketing efforts have also been initiated to persuade students to consider residence halls rather than apartment living.

In sum, dealing with the loss of first-year undergraduates has put substantial pressure on both Campus Dining Facilities and Residential Life. Meanwhile, the explosion of off-campus housing for the student population has not slowed. Columbia definitely counted upon continued growth in student numbers at MU to maintain its residence halls and replace outdated ones; that investment is now seriously threatened. The UM and MU administrations should continue to keep track of community instability since it impacts the quality of life for students, faculty and staff.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jeanne Abbott, chair of the MU Residential Life and Campus Dining Committee
Associate professor, School of Journalism