

Duke University

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DUKE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
ATHLETICS AND CAMPUS SERVICES COMMITTEE
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MEMORANDUM

TO: President Brodhead
FROM: David Snider, DSG VP, Member of Board of Trustees' Building and Grounds Comm.
Jay Ganatra, President of Campus Council
Elliott Wolf, President of Duke Student Government
Atin Garg, Member of Board of Trustees' Building and Grounds Comm.
DATE: 12/2/06
RE: West Campus Faculty Apartments

We strongly request that you reconsider the University's decision to allocate 10,000 square feet of West Campus dormitory space and \$3.5 million dollars to construct new faculty apartments. The Resolution for site and scope of the project, passed by the Executive Committee on November 3, was presented as an informative agenda at yesterday's Buildings and Grounds Committee. While members of the Committee were responsive to our concerns, since the resolution had already been passed, Dr. Burger suggested that we contact you directly. We are all strong proponents of measures to promote student-faculty interaction, but believe that this proposal is an inefficient and unjustified use of space and financial resources.

The decision to construct the apartments was not informed either by discussions with Campus Council or a survey of students to evaluate the success of the University's existing faculty-in residence program. The proposed locations appear problematic because of frequent late night programming near the proposed apartments and parking access issues. We are concerned that given the layouts of many of the dorms for which apartments are proposed will not be conducive to an ideal environment in which students and a faculty family would live without issue. Laurie Shannon of the English Faculty and a member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee echoed our concerns about finding faculty members, especially ones with families, who would want to live in these apartments.

Our more significant concern is that the 10,000 square feet required for the apartments would, according to John Pearce, result in the loss of 33 beds in some of the most desirable dormitories on campus. With the expansion of Pratt and the need to eliminate more beds on West when the Craven and Clocktower quads are renovated, this proposal appears to exacerbate an existing and growing West Campus housing shortage. Currently 60 students who are returning from study abroad next semester are in housing limbo because of a limited housing stock.

In terms of project cost, this proposal does not seem to be the best investment either in terms of the undergraduate living experience or fostering faculty-student interaction. Many of the dorms have had significant maintenance issues as a result of deferred maintenance, which has negatively impacted residents (from pipes bursting and forcing students to relocate rooms to the Edens air system developing mold and requiring the air conditioning to be disabled for the semester). The project cost is also higher over the long-term since it requires sacrificing 33 rooms, which annually generate over \$200,000 a year. In terms of the West Campus living experience this money could be better used in improving the actual facilities for students rather than creating new apartments to which students would have limited access. Additionally, if the core rationale for undertaking this project is fostering

faculty-student interaction, we believe that the \$3.5 million could be better utilized. The cost is equivalent to \$583 per student or \$1400 per West Campus resident. Hosting weekly dinners at the Washington Duke or other Durham restaurants is more likely to foster substantive student-faculty interaction than the apartments and would benefit residents without a corollary consequence to the housing stock. An allocation of \$3.5 million would pay for 6,000 undergraduates to eat 18 meals each with faculty at the Washington Duke.

We urge you to consider delaying this proposed construction in order to evaluate if this project is the most productive way to improve the undergraduate living experience and foster student-faculty interaction.

Cc: Larry Moneta, Paula Burger, John Mack, Bill Miller, Tallman Trask, Eddie Hull, Peter Lange