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11-17-2006

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Recommended Citation

Billings, Kim, "UNH Already Preparing For Next Year's First-Year Student Class" (2006). *UNH Today*. 1260.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/1260>

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UNH Already Preparing For Next Year's First-Year Student Class

Officials Talking To Student Leaders This Week

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November 17, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- University of New Hampshire officials said this week that the number of applications for next year's entering first-year class already exceeds the record number received at the same time last year.

"Students choosing to attend college continue to express strong interest in UNH," said Mark Rubinstein, vice president for student and academic services. "UNH continues to represent the best of what students are seeking from a college education: academically rigorous programs, complementary research and co-curricular opportunities, sufficient breadth of programs to provide choice, and yet still small enough to be personal."

Although the number of students who will be accepted for the fall 2007 freshman class is expected to be much smaller than this year's entering class, Rubinstein says that even the smaller incoming class won't fully resolve the issues of housing demand.

"We are reaching out to students now to hear their input on options we may need to consider," he explained. "We would rather students know well ahead of time about these options instead of being surprised in the spring."

Uncertainty around the number of current resident students who will want to sign up to live on campus next year is one consideration housing officials must consider, particularly in light of the recent Gables expansion and new residence halls coming online, scheduled for August, if construction stays on schedule. At the same time, Fairchild Hall will be off-line for renovations next fall. In addition, UNH-owned Woodside Apartments is slated to become mixed use so graduate students have more housing options on campus.

"With the information we have now and based on past trends, we are anticipating that we could have a potential of approximately 300 students needing to be housed as a third person in a double room or in lounges," explained William Conk, UNH director of housing.

He says there are three options for managing housing needs, and they are being discussed with students this week.

One option would be to increase the number of beds in the Mills suites and Woodside or Gables apartments by making some rooms triples. As the university did this semester, the number of triples in traditional residence halls would increase. Doing so would spread the use of triples to include upper class students as well as first-year students, thus reducing the

pressure that currently rests primarily with first-year students.

"If we go in this direction," said Conk, "we would continue our practice of reducing the per student room rates for those students in triples, thus rendering the strategy 'revenue neutral' for the university and offering our students some incentive to choose this option."

Another serious option is to conduct a housing lottery, where UNH Housing randomly identifies resident students who will be juniors and seniors next year, who would not be eligible for housing beyond this academic year. Students living in Woodside and Gables apartments are not included in the lottery.

The last time UNH conducted a lottery was in 2002.

If a decision is made to conduct a lottery, a computer program randomly assigns lottery numbers to all juniors and seniors living in residence halls, not apartments, and notifies them of this number before the end of the semester. This notification allows student with a low number to begin to prepare for the following fall semester, making decisions as they see appropriate.

When students return from the holiday break in January, the room sign-up process for next fall proceeds as normal with apartment sign up taking place and applications for undergraduate residence halls received.

Based upon total number of applications received for housing, not including those who have signed up for apartments, a final decision on the number of students to lottery off campus will be made and students will be notified of this decision.

The decision, said Conk, would be communicated to students before Spring Break.

"We will do the best we can to accommodate as many resident students as we can," he said. "The new residence halls help enormously, but we still find it difficult to keep up with the demand. On-campus housing is so attractive now that more and more of our students want to stay."