



# THE DORM Experience

By **DALLAS DAWS**  
Design **MERISSA ELLIOTT**  
Photos **DAVID DERONG**

Last summer, freshmen and transfer students eagerly awaited their dorm assignments as they prepared for a fresh start at Iowa State. Because of the overflow of new students, however, nearly 200 students discovered that they were assigned not to traditional dorm rooms, as they expected, but to den spaces.

The Department of Residence helped the den residents, including Will Ries, a junior in horticulture and landscape design and first-year transfer student, move into the dens. With the addition of window coverings and dorm furniture, the DOR had converted the dens, allowing the residents to have the privacy and benefits of a traditional dorm room.

At first, Will Ries was pleased to call this considerably larger room his new home. One month into the semester, however, he and his

roommate were forced to relocate. Ries and the rest of the den residents were left on their own to compete with one another for the remaining traditional roWoms.

Ries had not only been forced out of the den he had begun to call home, but also split from his roommate with whom he had formed a strong bond. The same department that put him into the dens was pushing him and several others out as quickly as they could, incurring fees on students who didn't move out in time. "The way they made it sound [in letters], we would have an option if we wanted to move, and then we really didn't," Ries said.

After the students chose their new rooms, they didn't have much time to pack up and find a way to move everything across campus. "They told us on Friday that we had to be moved out by 6:00 Monday morning, and then we were charged \$50 every day that we weren't moved out."

Leah Garrett, junior in kinesiology, also felt rushed out of the dens. On Access Plus, students are able to change their room assignments every semester when places open up. This year, students living in the dens were able to access this selection one day before the rest of the students in order to find new rooms, which opened for them at 6:00 a.m. Garret said, "I was up at 5:50 trying to get my computer open, and then everything went so fast. I just randomly clicked on [a room]"

After realizing she wouldn't be able to afford the place she picked along with a meal plan, Garrett had to back out of that spot and find a new one. The Department of Residence let the students pick where they wanted to live, but they said they felt like that put more pressure on them than if they would have been assigned new rooms. "I felt like it was, 'here's the bone, now pick through it,'" Garret said.



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While she was happy to get out of the dorms after living in them two years at Northwestern, her previous college, she did enjoy living in the dens because of the space and the community she grew to know. "I was on a coed floor, so I got to know a lot of girls and guys, and that helped because [Iowa State] is a lot bigger than where I'm from.

### **STUDENT LIFE**

This year, the Department of Residence (DOR) saw a greater number of students living in the dorms than they had seen since the 90's. Next year, they expect to see a similar number, if not a little larger, and they say they will be better prepared this time.

"We opened up all of the on-campus housing this year with 9,976 students in residence," says Lisa Ludovico, assistant director of the Assignments and Communications department. "We did assign students to dens. We made the decision later than we would have liked to, but there were some institutional processes we needed to follow first to get approval."

While it may seem like the least desirable situation, especially for students new to this campus, the Department of Residence was surprised to see that students had adjusted well to living in the dens. "Ultimately, while there were concerns from people who were assigned into dens, the response we received from students who were assigned into the dens was generally very positive," Ludovico says. "The students who lived there didn't want to move."

The DOR currently has a higher number of contracts submitted than they normally would at this time of year. Ludovico does expect that number to level off more, but she and the rest of the department are doing what they can to prepare for a high number of student residents.

"We have to prepare for the maximum number of contracts we have on hand, not necessarily the number of students that show up on the first day," Englin says.

Ludovico says the DOR prepared about 260 den spaces last fall, which next year will serve as a cushion.

"We've also looked at some permanent room locations where the past few years we've converted some triples to doubles, some doubles to singles and we're reversing those in some circumstances," Ludovico says. Most residence halls on campus have some rooms that were designed to be triples. Friley, Oak and Elm are among the buildings with the most triple-capacity rooms, along with Birch, Welch, and Roberts.

A few buildings do not have triple rooms, such as Willow and Larch, and others have singles that will be converted back into doubles. Wallace and Wilson, two residence halls that had been used for super-single rooms, will mostly consist of double rooms next year, with one floor of each building remaining a super-single for returning students.

### **WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES**

Aside from handling the unexpected increase in on-campus residents, the DOR has many other tasks and projects to juggle. The DOR is in charge of all aspects of student living, from contracting and assigning the residence halls, Frederiksen Court, and Schilleter University Village, to maintenance, upkeep, and renovations of all the above. They also handle the contracting for the Dining Center as well; but in all other aspects, the Dining Center and DOR are separate units.

"As an auxiliary, we are entirely self-funded, and so we don't use any general fund money of university funds," Pete Englin, director of the Department of Residence, says. "We're really stewards of the student rental money that they pay to live on campus." This means that most of their funds come from the UBill that on-campus student residents pay twice a year. Englin also mentioned that they receive some revenue

from students living on campus taking summer classes as well as summer conferences held on campus.

"We're trying to be mindful about how we spend that money that helps them be more successful as students at Iowa State first and foremost," Englin says. One way the DOR has been working to better serve the students on campus was by installing more security cameras. "If we have student room furniture, or common room furniture that gets removed, we're able to see when it went, [and] who it went with," Englin says. "The only time we would look at the tape is actually if there's an incident of some sort. We've also put cameras in the elevators and that's helped with either incidental damage or intentional vandalism." While the security cameras may hinder the fun of those who enjoy jumping in the elevators and throwing chairs out the fifth-floor window, the majority of students can enjoy living in residence halls with less destruction.

"We also need to maintain the facilities the best we can to provide good value [to the students]," Englin says. With a projected income for the 2011-2012 school year of \$45 million, Lynn Larsen, the business manager of the DOR, was able to create a budget outlining their anticipated expenses for the year.

That room and board section of the U-Bill students pay every year goes to pay general operating expenses such as utilities, insurance, maintenance and repair, and staff salaries and benefits. While that cost was expected to be around \$25.7 million for this school year, that doesn't mean that everything else is profit.

"We have a work request system," Englin says. "We do about 40,000 work orders a year, and our own staff goes in and complete those work orders. There's around \$1.7-1.8 million set aside that would pay for parts and other things to do repair kind of work." This takes care of damages or issues that may need to be fixed in the residence halls.



The DOR is in the process of installing sprinklers throughout all of the dorms on campus. This is a higher level of prevention safety, which could also allow the department to install full kitchenettes in the future, something that Englin has been hearing students ask for. “It requires approval through the state fire marshal’s office, and the only way we’re going to get approval potentially is to have sprinklered buildings to start with,” he says. Wallace, Wilson, Larch and Friley halls have yet to install sprinklers, but Englin estimates that project could take at least four years.

Willow hall has seen a facelift this past summer with new windows, temperature control, and newly water-proofed building. Larch hall

will be seeing the same changes this summer, which Englin says will cost around \$3.2 million.

The DOR salaries are included in the budget as well and take up the second major chunk in the overall budget layout. In order to run any sort of operation, the people working have to earn a living. Currently, the DOR has room in the budget for just under \$9 million. This includes the salaries for not only the Department of Residence regular staff, but also for undergraduate and graduate students working in the department as well as all of the CA’s in the residence halls.

The Department of Residence is also required to put a fixed percent of their revenue away as a surplus, should anything come up and to pay back loans they needed to build and renovate.

“The building that took place under my predecessor is essentially a mortgage payment that you would pay on your house,” Englin says. “We have a debt service payment of about \$8 million a year that helped us build Frederiksen Court and renovate Maple and Buchanan halls, build the Union Drive Community Center, Larch and Eaton halls.”

Ultimately, the DOR says its goal is to help students be successful here at Iowa State by providing them with a place to live that supports community, friendships and learning. Englin is fond of saying, “We are not selling a room; we sell an experience.”