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# Gardner-Webb freshman housing announcement sparks frustration in current Stroup residents



By Emily White

On Jan. 28, Gardner-Webb University announced new first-year living community plans for the coming years, causing frustration for those currently living in the residence halls that are being converted. Beginning in the fall of 2022, the residence halls of Stroup, Myers and Spangler will be strictly female first-year living, and Mauney and Nanny halls will be available only for male first-year living.

While all five of these residence halls are being converted, no residents have been found more upset at this announcement than the current residents of Stroup Hall. They first informed the current Stroup residents of this information over a zoom call that was not received well. "I feel as if they should have informed us sooner because we were informed about one short week before the application process for next year began which brought so many unknowns and confusion," said Kyndal Jackson, current freshman and Stroup resident.

These plans were soon released on social media as well as on the university website, bringing more widespread attention to the issue. When Gardner-Webb posted this announcement via Instagram, the vast majority of the comments section on their post was filled with the hashtag, #savestroup, as residents advocated having the ability to maintain their residency in Stroup come this fall. Soon after, an entire account was created with the handle @save.stroup, pushing for the university to reconsider its decision about changing to a first-year living community in Stroup Hall. In its first post, this account said, "The residents of Stroup were never asked how they felt on this situation, nor were their opinions on this taken into consideration."

Residents expressed displeasure with the fact that their building will no longer be available for them to live in, especially when they did not have any say in the process of making this decision.

This new living situation leaves only one traditional dorm available for upperclassmen women to live in, being Decker Hall, which is known for having many issues including mold and heating issues. Besides that, the suites and apartments are available which are hard enough to get into as is due to high demand and the ability of those currently residing there to reclaim their space and pull others in, not to mention the large added cost of living in an apartment. "Being evicted from a place many people know as home is upsetting. There are some residents here that have lived in Stroup every year and may have a legitimate reason to stay an extra semester, for example, student teaching with education majors," said Kyndall Jackson. This touches on the important point that some upperclassmen are now having to deal with this displacement after only living in Stroup over the course of their college years.

While the intent behind creating an all first-year living community is understandable for camaraderie among new students, at the same time this plan is robbing the upperclassmen of the community they've built as well as not giving freshmen the chance to form the same bonds with upperclassmen.

After the uproar on social media about this issue, the Dean of Students, Lesley Villarose, reached out to the residents to have another meeting and discuss the student's concerns over the new housing situation. While this meeting has not changed the university's current plans, hopefully it provided an opportunity for the students to have their thoughts heard about the way this situation has been handled. This also can be an opportunity for the school to learn to take into consideration the students' feelings in the future when making decisions that affect groups so directly.