

RESOLUTION: Student Room and Board Rates 2021-22

Background

For 2020-21, Western Michigan University operated 14 residence halls, two dining facilities, six cafés, and five apartment-style complexes. In the fall 2020 semester, 3,486 residents lived on-campus, and 73.22% of degree seeking, first time freshmen chose to live in the residence halls.

Residence Life and Dining Services continue to support and assist WMU in recruitment, retention, as well as student success efforts. The integrated planning and budgeting strategy has allowed for significant incentives and discounts for students and families, while also enabling collaborative, future-looking, administration of housing, dining and student center operations and facilities. With the completion of the new Student Center in 2022, all dining centers and most of the current housing portfolio will have been constructed after 2013.

A new Dining Center is scheduled to open fall 2022 as part of the new Student Center. Student-oriented dining and hospitality options will provide distinct cuisines and unique food choices for the entire university community and guests. Bright, engaging environments with fresh food prepared in front of guests will be featured making the new environment a point of distinction and pride for Western Michigan University.

Bistro BTL, opening fall 2021, is a café located in the new Aviation Education Center at the Battle Creek campus. Bistro BTL will offer a variety of hot and cold ready to eat food options as well as a meal exchange option for students who have meal plans.

Beginning fall 2021, all on campus housing residents will enjoy the benefit of laundry being included in their room and board rate. There will no longer be an additional charge for students to utilize this essential amenity.

The uncertainties of COVID-19, combined with a significant decrease of in person course offerings, caused the number of residence hall residents to decrease by 34% for fall 2020. As self-supporting auxiliary units, the housing and dining operations must continue to balance the COVID-19 impact with rising operational costs, building infrastructure needs, debt service, student and University support, occupancy management, and competitiveness with other universities. At the same time, a commitment to maintaining and advancing programs, services, incentives, and scholarships that support student success and development remain a priority. The housing and dining operations have been able to effectively manage these challenging times by being responsible financial stewards over the past years as well as participating in intensive budget planning for FY21 and FY22. The housing and dining operations are working hard to bring students back to a more typical campus environment for fall 2021.

This year's request continues to support responsible fiscal management and educational campus living that is affordable, attainable and attractive.

Recommended Action

It is recommended the administration be authorized to implement a 3.00% increase to student room and board rates for 2021/22, effective fall semester 2021.