PROPOSAL: Student Room and Board Rates 2019-2020

Background

For 2018-19, Western Michigan University operated 22 residence halls, five dining facilities, seven cafés, and four apartment-style complexes. In the fall 2018 semester, 5,083 residents lived on-campus, and 89.5% of degree seeking, first time freshmen chose to live in the residence halls.

As self-supporting auxiliary units, the housing and dining operations must balance rising operational costs, building infrastructure needs, debt service, student and University support, 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. This year’s request continues to support responsible fiscal management and educational campus living that is affordable, attainable and attractive.

Residence Life and Dining Services continue to support and assist WMU in recruitment, retention and student success efforts. The integrated planning and budgeting strategy has allowed for significant incentives and discounts for students and families, while also enabling completion of nearly $82.1 million of bonded projects and $63.5 million of self-funded renovations, repairs, and safety and sustainability improvements.

In an on-going effort to modernize meal plan offerings and prepare for the future, meal plans have been restructured. Beginning with fall 2019, there will be three available meal plans, which offer a combination of access to dining centers, dining dollars, and guest passes. The new meal plan structure simplifies the meal plan offerings, focuses on the value of the dining experience and offerings, and strengthens the opportunity to build community in the campus dining centers.

Planning for new housing and dining facilities, located in the South Neighborhood, is well under way. New housing in the South Residential Neighborhood is being re-envisioned to offer a combination of living styles that complement the total housing selection at the University. Architecturally and visually appealing, the new complex will have a positive impact on residential life in the south neighborhood and will reflect the needs of students today and into the future. Earlier this spring, construction for the new housing began and the planned opening is fall 2020. Additionally, a new residential dining center and retail food options are included in plans for 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 the University.

Recommended Action

It is recommended the administration be authorized to implement a 3.12% increase to student room and board rates for 2019-20, effective fall semester 2019.