Housing group to open office on campus

By Pat Mrozcek

Residence halls are providing more than just food and shelter these days. New attitudes among housing officers are creating both educational opportunities and more services for college students in dormitories across the country.

Because of this expansion, the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International (ACUHO-I) has found it necessary to establish a business office.

And it has selected a very appropriate spot — an Ohio State residence hall — for its first central support services office.

Beginning this month, the ACUHO-I office will be located in Jones Graduate Tower.

"And what more appropriate place for a housing office than in a residence hall," says Rhea Dawn Smith, ACUHO-I office manager.

Smith says Ohio State was selected from among four finalists because of its central location, accessibility, and the receptiveness of campus officials.

Ohio State has about the fourth largest program in the country, housing 400 families, 800 graduate students and about 11,000 undergraduates in 26 different residence halls. Michigan State has the largest program with 15,000 students.

Ohio State has a total of 72 buildings involved in the University's program, said Bill Hall, director of residence and dining halls.

Hall said he is pleased the ACUHO-I office will be located on campus.

"We enthusiastically went after the placement here. It's going to be mutually beneficial and provide both easy access for us and our support services for the international organization. It brings prestige to the University to have the office here," he added.

ACUHO-I and the University agreed to a 1,600-square-foot suite of offices on the first floor of the graduate student housing unit.

To celebrate the founding of the international office at Ohio State, there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony inside the suite on April 12. ACUHO-I executive board members from across the country will join University and residence and dining hall officials at the 4-6 p.m. open house.

Founded in 1952, ACUHO-I currently has 640 members from universities and colleges in the United States, Canada, England, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

Housing officers at higher education institutions realized their need to share problems and information when veterans from World War II created a demand for traditional and nontraditional housing on campuses across the country.

Since then, trends have come and trends have gone, but keeping students warm, fed and safe remains a fundamental concern for housing officers, Smith says.

William Paleen, ACUHO-I past president and director of Residence Life at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., notes several trends in student housing.

"One of the trends I perceive is a growing recognition on college campuses that the residential program is part of the education enterprise. It's more than just a service function. It provides educational and experience functions, also."

James C. Grimm, ACUHO-I president-elect and director of housing at the University of Florida at Gainesville, sees two basic problems facing housing officers on college and university campuses.

The first is a drop in enrollment, which is creating occupancy problems.

"You'll see in the north and northeast, there are some (universities) affected by the drop in enrollment."

"In other areas, the difficulty is renovation. Most college housing was built in the 1950s and has housed million of students through the years. Now much of it needs a lot of renovation."

A major organizational push involves getting more students involved, Grimm adds.
Housing group celebrates five years with Ohio State

By Amy Snow
Lantern staff writer

The Association of College and University Housing Officers celebrated its fifth anniversary of being housed at Ohio State.

ACUHO is a national organization that represents housing and residence life officers of 800 colleges and universities in the United States and around the world, said Melanie McClellan, graduate administrative assistant.

ACUHO's primary function is to be a network where ideas can be shared by different schools. This way the schools can benefit from each other's experiences, she said.

"This represents a pretty wide variety of people. Some people tend to think that you build a building and stick students in it and that's it. If you've ever lived on campus, you realize there is more to it than that," said McClellan, a graduate student in higher education from Bremen, Ga.

McClellan said there are many other issues about student housing to consider. She said staffing, discipline, education, food services, and security issues need to be addressed.

ACUHO was founded in 1952 and was originally run by volunteers from housing and residence programs, she said.

"Five years ago the organization realized that it was an awful big commitment to ask someone to make," McClellan said. "Particularly for the president because this meant their secretarial staff had to take over all the clerical work for the organization. We thought this might discourage some people from running for an office."

Another problem ACUHO encountered was its records were being moved from place to place, depending on who the president was, she said.

McClellan said ACUHO wanted to come up with a central office to provide support services. The group did not want to take leadership away from the volunteers, but they did want a central office to provide a clerical staff, a place for records and a continuing address for people to get information about the organization.

Ohio State was among four of the finalists because of its central location, accessibility and the receptiveness of campus officials, said Rhea Dawn Smith, central support services manager.

Two other Big Ten schools and a school in the Washington, D.C., area were also finalists.

When the Central Support Services office moved to Ohio State, it went to a network computer system that enabled the organization to provide more services to members.

McClellan said there is a database for every school that is a member.

"This enables us to give information on specific topics with specific populations at specific schools, and we can just print it out," she said.

"For example, if someone is doing a research project on schools that house 200 people, OSU's experience may not be relevant. But if a school is like OSU, you may need to deal with people that house over 5,000."

Alice Grider, assistant director of Residence and Dining Halls, said, "Primarily the system can allow us to gain perspective. We are able to use this program to look at other universities and colleges in different parts of the country."

There is a directory with each school and eight of their staff members in different divisions of housing, McClellan said.

They also use the computer to produce publications.
Dorm life becoming as comfy as home

Students can enjoy high-tech gadgets

By Holly Goodman
Dispatch Staff Reporter

Welcome to college. Feel free to plug in your computers, stereo sets and microwave ovens, flip on your favorite cable channel and make yourself at home; dormitory living is growing comfortable.

Until recently, computers and microwave ovens in the dorm room were unheard of. Television and stereo sets were luxuries. And a private bathroom, well, not many people were fortunate enough to share the showers with fewer than 16 others.

Things have changed.

Today’s students not only have television sets in almost every room, but in many places cable service is available.

About 100 vendors are displaying their high-tech wares, functional furnishings and services at the Ohio Union, 1789 N. High St., for the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International summer conference.

It’s a display of just how comfortable campus living is becoming.

The conference, which runs through Wednesday, is a chance for housing officials to exchange notes on issues facing today’s residence hall directors, such as cultural differences and domestic partners, and to shop for the dormitory of the future.

Gary Johnson, president of the association, said today’s university is beginning to cater more to student wants.

“They want it to be the way they want it to be,” he said, and among the things “they” want are all the comforts of home.

Johnson is setting up several “rooms of the future” for next year’s conference in San Antonio, Texas. Included in the rooms is an appliance that already has been plugged in at hundreds of schools: the Micro-Fridge.

It combines a microwave oven and a refrigerator/freezer so students, who previously were not permitted to bring microwave ovens into the dorm, can now cook their food.

Bob Bennett, president of Micro-Fridge, said wiring in many residence halls cannot handle such high-powered appliances, but the two-in-one gadget cuts down on the power drain because both appliances are run through a single cord.

When the microwave oven is operating, the refrigerator automatically shuts off, then turns itself back on when the oven stops. About 80,000 units have been installed nationwide, he said, and Ohio State University students have the option of having one installed in their rooms for a rental fee of $110 a year.

The furniture in tomorrow’s residence halls also will look a little different. Desks will become “computer friendly,” with areas to house monitors and printers, Johnson said.

Beyond electronics, today’s students want privacy, Johnson said. More than a microwave oven, students want their own bathrooms. They’re still working on that one, he said.

Micro-Fridge President Bob Bennett displays two of his company’s microwave oven/refrigerator combinations that are used in college dormitories.