Lack of support will shut down cultural center

By Dawn E. Wilson
Lantern staff writer

The multi-cultural center in two North Campus dorms will be eliminated after this year, said Glenda Belote, director for student development.

Located in Blackburn and Haverfield houses, the center was established two years ago. It houses 35-40 students. Belote said the elimination will be "minimally disruptive" to those students, because they will be able to stay in their present rooms if they wish.

The center was originally intended to develop interaction between American and international students.

"That never materialized because we couldn't find enough multi-cultural students who wanted to live there," Belote said.

Belote said a balance of various cultures among residents in the center was never achieved, so the center was not significantly different from any of the regular environments in the dorms.

The decision to eliminate the center was made by Belote, William Hall, director of residence and dining halls, and Roger Meyer, director of administrative operations. The three reached the decision after reviewing the recommendations made by an environmental task force in mid-January.

The task force, led by South Area Coordinator Terry Piper, included two members of the Office of Contracts and Assignments, two dorm directors and seven students.

Such a task force is created about every two years to review the living environments in the dorms. Belote said the purposes of the review are to see if the environments are accomplishing what they were intended to do and to see if students are still interested in the special environments.

Special environments besides the multi-cultural center include the honors residential center in Taylor Tower and the engineering floors in Houck House.

No commitment

Belote said the center never garnered much support from faculty and staff members.

"There was no commitment," she said.

Because of the lack of support, the center never developed the kind of programming for residents it should have, Belote said.

"We (Residence and Dining Halls) delivered on what we promised and were prepared to expand it. We've given it a fair shot," she said, referring to the two year period since the center was created.

Belote said the Office of Residence and Dining Halls believed the center was not functioning as intended, and therefore the office was "holding out promises" of an environment it was not providing.

Carmen Alvarez-Breckenridge, coordinator of the Office of Hispanic Student Programs, said she served on the committee that originally developed the center. Since that time, however, she said she does not remember her office having any involvement with the center. She said she hasn't been kept informed about the center.

Tina Love, coordinator of Black Student Programs, said she was unaware of the center's existence.

Not giving up

Belote said she is still committed to the concept of a culturally-oriented living environment. She said Residence and Dining Halls "will be going back to the drawing board" and hopes to bring such an environment back into the system in a year or two.

Karlin Kurtz, a sophomore from Bucyrus who has lived in the center for two years, said she is sorry the center is closing but acknowledged that the program is not working well.

"We do things with our floor, but not cultural things. I don't think it's got anything to do with the cultural thing anymore," she said.

Sharmila Ruparel, a freshman from Bombay, India, said she is against the change.

"It's helped me a lot. I don't think I could have made it in one of the all-American dorms," she said.

But Ruparel also said the center could be improved.

"There is room for improvement, definitely," she said.

Because the students can return to the dorm next year, Ruparel said the change in the environment may not be very great.

"Even if we lose the name, it probably would be as multi-cultural as it is now," she said.
Just like ringing a bell

Andrew Dutter, a freshman majoring in biology, strums his guitar on the steps of Haverfield House Monday afternoon.
Trustees approve North Residential District transformation

Facilities will enhance second-year student experience

As a continuation of its commitment to enhance the student experience and provide additional support for on-time degree completion, The Ohio State University Board of Trustees approved a comprehensive $396 million plan to transform the North Residential District. This will create a dynamic living environment, increasing the number of beds and adding new dining, recreation and support facilities. This new environment will expand the second-year residential experience and be designed to lead to higher graduation and retention rates and improved student engagement.

“We know that students who live in the residence halls for two years have significantly higher second-year retention and graduation rates than those who have never lived on campus,” said Ohio State President E. Gordon Gee. “We are creating another exceptional living environment, complementing work already underway in the South Residential District, incorporating the elements of student success, programmatic needs, architectural innovation, and student and faculty interaction.”

In April, the Board of Trustees approved a pilot of the programmatic components of a second-year experience which includes individual development modules with applications for career growth and global citizenry, increased faculty engagement and mentorship, and a $2,000 stipend program to increase student participation in experiential education opportunities.

“To allow this innovative second-year experience to achieve its full potential, it has become clear that facilities improvements must be integrated with program innovations,” said Ohio State Provost Joseph A. Alutto. “Over the past year, as the program elements have been redrafted, a feasibility study was conducted to look at the opportunities to enhance the North Residential District. With this program, Ohio State will set the bar nationally through the development of an innovative second-year experience and the construction of the facilities to support that experience.”

The total project budget of $396 million will be funded through bonds and university reserve funds. Any
increase in room rates will be capped at a maximum of six percent annually, which is in line with recent increases and well within the increases of many peer institutions.

About 3,200 new bed spaces would be added to the North Residential area, bringing the total to 6,359. The first phase of construction would begin by July 2013 with 1,600 new/renovated beds completed by June 2015. The second phase of construction – involving an additional 1,600 beds – would begin in July 2014 and be completed by June 2016.

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OSU trustees OK hiring for $396 million plan

Project would double beds on north campus

By Encarnacion Pyle
The Columbus Dispatch  Saturday September 1, 2012 6:07 AM

Ohio State University says it's spending $396 million to transform north campus to create a one-of-a-kind neighborhood where students will live and learn in bold new ways.

Campus trustees yesterday gave OSU officials the authority to begin hiring the architects, engineers and others they'll need to design the project, which includes adding 3,200 beds in several new dorms along Lane Avenue and N. High Street.

That would double the number of beds on north campus to 6,359 — giving Ohio State plenty of room to make good on its promise to require all second-year students to live on campus.

President E. Gordon Gee has been saying since 2008 that he wants all sophomores to live in the dorms as a way to boost students' retention and graduation rates as well as their overall college experience.

"It is not just about where our students live, but it is about enticing and enriching the ways students learn inside and outside of the classroom," President E. Gordon Gee told the board yesterday.

Many business and apartment owners say draining students out of their neighborhood would bring blight, lower property values and more crime. In a countywide reappraisal done last year, the university area was one of the few places where value rose by double digits, they said.

The plan calls for 11 new dorms, two dining halls and a 35,000-square-
foot fitness center among three existing 12-story dorms: Drackett, Jones and Taylor towers, said Jay Kasey, senior vice president for administration and planning. Eight of the new residence halls would be between five and seven stories, while three will be 12 stories.

Four existing dorms — Blackburn, Haverfield, Nosker and Scott — would be torn down to make room for the new buildings, Kasey said. The dorms will be built in four small neighborhoods, with each having its own green common where students could mingle with faculty and staff.

In the middle of the 24-acre north residential district will be a town square. Ohio State also plans to build an outdoor plaza and glass-fronted student-support building on the corner of Lane and High to welcome people to the northeastern edge of campus.

Construction is slated to begin by July 2013. The first 1,600 beds are to be completed by June 2015, followed by the remaining 1,600 by June 2016.

Ohio State will pay the $396 million price tag through bonds that will be repaid through room-and-board and recreation fees and university reserve funds. Room rates will be capped at a maximum of 6 percent annual increases, which is in line with recent increases, officials said.

Students living on campus pay an average of $11,695 in room-and-board rates this school year.

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