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Campus beds stay empty

by Elizabeth Wellford
Hatchet Reporter

Although GW took out leases on City Hall and Pennsylvania House last year to accommodate an influx of about 450 freshmen on campus and the University continues to build more housing, about 130 residence hall beds are currently empty.

Officials said that the number of empty beds reflects students who initially request housing but leave before the semester ends and that, at any time, zero to 130 beds are vacant out of the 6,200 available slots on campus.

On average, about 98 percent of the beds on campus are filled.

"Vacancies on campus, like any property, occur on a cyclical basis ... student demand for housing crests in August and January," said housing director Andy Sonn. "In general, we begin the academic year (at) over a hundred percent occupancy - we had 40 or so students assigned to temporary housing in the Doubletree - and the occupancy percentage declines from there."

Sonn said reasons for vacancies include students transferring, taking leaves of absence, withdrawing from the University, studying abroad and getting sanctioned to move out for behavioral reasons.

"Over the course of the semester, we typically have an average of five to six withdrawals from housing per week," Sonn said. "Unfortunately, we can't predict which beds will be vacant, and we don't want to place a lot of students in overflow housing while we wait for rooms to empty."

Housing prices currently range from \$6,610 a year for a six-person room in Thurston Hall to \$8,770 for a single in the 1957 E St. building. With almost 70 housing options, the average price for a room is about \$7,593.

Based on this average, the University earns about \$987,000 for 130 beds in an academic year.

However, housing lease agreements are "binding" for the academic year, meaning if students move out of their rooms they must pay the full amount, even if they withdraw from housing before the school year begins.

The only exceptions to the rule are students graduating, withdrawing, transferring, studying abroad or taking leaves of

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Jeff Baum/Hatchet photographer

Junior Amish Patel jumps over sophomore Omer Majid in a traditional Indian dance at the Raas Chaos dance competition Saturday at Lisner Auditorium.

Raas rocks Lisner

by Kristie Schumacher
Hatchet Reporter

More than 1,000 students and friends cheered and clapped for their favorite South Asian performance teams at the second annual Raas Chaos competition in Lisner Auditorium Saturday night.

Tufts, with the only all-female group in competition, grabbed the \$1,250 grand prize at the end of the night. Georgetown came in second, bringing home \$750. Only the first and second

place teams were announced.

Students said they were attracted to the event, an intercollegiate South Asian dance competition featuring five East Coast universities, because of its unique performances and spirited atmosphere.

"I came out to get the Raas Chaos experience," grad student Nina Ahujas said. "I wanted to get some culture while having a good time. It is important to show support for an event like this."

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President proposes trimesters

■ SJT calls for committee to examine calendar change

by Mosheh Oinounou
News Managing Editor

University President Stephen Joel Trachtenberg proposed shifting to a 14-week trimester academic calendar last week, a move he said would increase GW's revenue and "efficiency." Trachtenberg's proposal, which he says "needs to be massaged," calls for the formation of an ad-hoc working group to research the unconventional system and present a report on alternative calendars by early May.

While some administrators said they are open to the idea of the trimester system, which could be adopted as early as fall 2005, they explained that they would like all possible effects to be researched before making a final decision.

Some students, including Student Association President Phil Robinson, said they are wary of a switch from the semester system and its possible effects on summer employment, academics, tuition, social life and overall life on campus.

"I have a campus and I have a lot of sunken resources ... you have to ask yourself if you are using your resources to their full potential," Trachtenberg said, adding that a trimester system would keep residence halls and campus buildings occupied near capacity during the whole calendar year.

Trachtenberg said he came upon the proposal after realizing that most schools work off a century-old agrarian calendar that allowed students to go home in the summer to farm. He cited budget cuts at other universities during his speech, noting that the proposal would help in the annual effort to keep tuition down and faculty pay up.

"I don't sit around trying to figure out how to stir the pot," he said. Trachtenberg also said the University needs to "apply every bit of wit" to using its untapped resources.

He said he is looking forward to seeing the committee report, set for completion by May 1, and will give "serious thought to

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Theater to open near GW

by Sue Yoon
Hatchet Reporter

Students will be able to walk to D.C.'s most "state-of-the-art" movie theater with the scheduled opening of a 3,000-seat Loews Theater in Georgetown this week.

The theater, scheduled to open Friday, was supposed to open earlier this month but was delayed because of construction problems.

"I think that having a theater so close to campus will be cool," freshman Justin Granger said. "I have been going all the way out to Pentagon City to watch first-run movies."

The theater, the largest in District, will feature 14 oversized screens, stadium seating, an expanded concession menu, state-

of-the-art projection and digital sound, officials said

Officials boasted the theater's location, on the site of the former home of the historic Georgetown Incinerator, between Wisconsin Avenue and 31st Street. It will feature the restored incinerator's 175-foot smokestack as the lobby backdrop.

The theater, spanning nearly 67,000 square feet, will be easily accessible from the Georgetown Metro Connection bus and will have underground parking.

During the theater's grand opening festivities later this year, free giveaways will include a Loews Cineplex Season Pass.

"Some lucky person is going to get to see films at the theater for free for an entire year," said Sekita

Ekrek, spokeswoman for the Loews project. "We'll also be hosting Movie Madness \$1 shows, with proceeds benefiting the mayor's youth charity, called Life Pieces to Masterpieces."

Ekrek said the theater should have a positive impact on the community.

"You can shop, dine and go to the movies at Loews, all within walking distance," Ekrek said. "In terms of local economics, the theater will add close to 100 jobs to the community."

Retail store officials in Georgetown said the new theater will affect them both positively and negatively because it will draw more people to Georgetown

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Ellen Rockower/Hatchet photographer

Loews Theater, located on K Street between 31st Street and Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown, is scheduled to open Friday.

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