This article discusses the importance of educational and developmental programming in college and university family housing. Historical origins of family housing serve as determining factors in the present state of programming. The changing student population, the ACUHO-I standards, and current practices are discussed, as well as the institutional obligation to provide such programming as a way to distinguish university family housing from apartment housing provided in the private sector.

INTRODUCTION

Programming in college and university family housing varies widely across institutions. At some, programming and staffing resemble that of residence halls, while at others the programming aspect is nonexistent. Historical factors have contributed to the lack of programming at some institutions; however, the changing student population and relationship with higher education call for family housing to provide an educational component often reserved exclusively for single student housing.

HISTORY

Family housing at colleges and universities has existed only since the 1940s, when the need arose to house World War II veterans who, with the help of the GI Bill, arrived on college campuses across the nation (Moen, 1992). The number of married students on college campuses in the United States has increased over the years from three to six
percent in 1945 (Flores, 1972) to a steady range of 10 to 20% (Moen, 1992). Since many university administrators thought that married students would be a temporary population on campuses, institutions designed family housing as a temporary arrangement; many married students lived in converted army and navy barracks. This temporary attitude toward families on campus still lingers in the facilities management and the service delivery of family housing today (Moen, 1992).

The student population of colleges and universities, and therefore, the resident population of family housing, differs greatly from that of years past. Between 1980 and 1994, most of the enrollment growth at colleges and universities occurred in students who could be described as nontraditional (Levine & Cureton, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). In fact, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education predicts that, by the year 2000, 50% of students in higher education will be 22 years of age or older (1980). Predictions aside, many of today's colleges and universities are finding that married students comprise 20 to 25% of their student populations, a "sizable and potentially powerful minority" (Greenberg & DeCoster, 1976, p. 25). In addition, single parents account for a growing part of the nontraditional student group (Holliday, 1985). Since students who live in family housing fall mainly into these categories, housing administrators must carefully consider how these population trends will affect their campuses in the years to come.

**BENEFITS OF PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENT FAMILIES**

Much evidence confirms the value of educational and developmental programming for student families. Riker and DeCoster (1971) stated that learning related to most major goals of higher education takes place where the student lives. Schuh (1985) and Moen (1992) discussed the importance of implementing educational and developmental programming in family housing, and Conneely (1992) and J. M. Schmidt (personal
communication, October 21, 1998) described the commonly held belief among housing professionals that a well-developed sense of community leads to resident retention, resulting in a win/win situation for student and institution alike. Residents who feel more connected to the community are more likely to stay, resulting in fewer costs associated with turnover and vacancy of apartments. This scenario makes funds used for programming in family housing an investment rather than an outright expense. In addition, the diversity of age in the residents of family housing provides an optimal environment in which to reap the benefits of intergenerational programming described by Berkowitz and Benderly (1989). Clearly, the value of programming in family housing has been well established.

In fact, the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International's (ACUHO-I) Standards for College and University Student Housing (1991) refer numerous times to the importance of providing such programming. Most broadly, the Standards state that, "The mission of Housing and Residence Life includes...providing a learning environment and related cocurricular programs which promote maturity and academic success..." (p. 1). In addition, the Standards include an entire functional area devoted to education/programming where they state that students should have opportunities "to develop a mature style of relating to others...to live cooperatively with others...for the development of appreciation for new ideas, cultural differences, and lifestyle...[and] to identify, develop, and/or confirm a sense of identity" (p. 7-8). Since educational and developmental programming can provide an effective means to meet these Standards, and since the Standards apply to all residents of college and university housing, one can conclude that ACUHO-I considers this type of programming to be beneficial to residents of family housing. Nevertheless, many family housing operations fail to offer this component to their residents.

CURRENT SHORTFALLS IN PROGRAMMING
Despite the changing student population, the established value programming and the standards of a professional organization, many family housing operations have not kept pace with the changing needs of their resident populations. Residual effects of the "temporary" attitude of the 1940s have resulted in many housing organizations delivering only the business side of family housing, providing a clean, safe, and well-maintained environment devoid of much programming and community development activities. This environment meets students today who come to college with more emotional problems than in the past (Levine & Cureton, 1998), therefore requiring more support in their development as students. Beyerlein, Brandel, Hamilton, Nededog, and Thoman (1982) identified support from upper-level administration as a promoter of community development in family housing; however, Moen (1992) noted that higher education administrators (vice-presidents, directors, etc.) often overlook or disregard education and programming in family housing (p. 13). J. M. Schmidt (personal communication, October 22, 1998) stated that programming in family housing is not a priority in most housing operations across the country, and Moen (1992) wrote that the socially oriented activities in which married students most often participate "leave a great deal to be desired as activities designed to encourage leadership, personal growth and development, or spouse enrichment" (p. 4). In a survey of live-in apartment staff, Whalen (1989) reported that "doing educational programs for residents" was a task that live-in staff performed an average of about once a month. Clearly, the current state of programming in many family housing operations does not adequately serve the resident population. This lack of educational and developmental programming has left a sea of uncultivated opportunities for student development.

THE NEED FOR PROGRAMMING

College and university housing operations have the obligation to provide educational and developmental programming for residents of family housing. The primary reason for the existence of all university housing lies in the belief that the residential component of
a student's life on campus contributes significantly to the total educational experience. Shaffer (1969) stated that, "If a student's residence has a significant educational contribution to make, colleges have an obligation to organize and administer housing to achieve the maximum possible educational benefits. This is a vastly different concept than just being in the housing business" (p.121). University housing that does recognize and implement its educational mission should abdicate its position as a provider of housing and leave students to seek shelter in the private sector (Busselen & Busselen, 1975). In fact, many state anti-competition laws prohibit educational institutions, especially public institutions, from being solely in the "housing business" (Fuchsberg, 1988). Institutions must demonstrate that the housing services they provide support the educational mission and goals of the institution in order to legitimately operate as a part of that institution. Without the programming component of family housing, the residential experience holds minimal ties to the educational missions of most institutions. Above all, student affairs administrators have the obligation to concern themselves with the development of each student, regardless of the student's familial status and living arrangement.

CONCLUSION

Though the history of family housing has led it to a point where programming and a focus on building community are not priorities in many housing operations, current student population shifts show an increased market for family housing and a need for this type of programming. University housing operations cannot afford to miss out on the opportunities for growth that family housing offers, and they must provide a unique residential learning environment for families that distinguishes itself from the private sector. Fortunately, the diverse student population of family housing, including single parents, international students, nontraditional students, and in some cases gay and lesbian couples, offers developmental opportunities that cannot be found anywhere else in higher education (Moen, 1992). As the traditional student population shrinks, housing
operations will be forced to evaluate the continually blurring line between residence hall and apartment housing and to consider which populations should benefit from educational and developmental programming. In light of the information presented in this article, family housing operations should take a close look at the residential environments they provide to students and consider increased programming as a way to retain residents and provide a living environment closely related to the mission of the institution. Family housing offers an unparalleled venue for growth in the area of student development, and this uniqueness can give family housing the competitive edge that it needs for the future.

REFERENCES


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