

F&M houses all but a few students

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It was an annual ritual.

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Silverang.

About 170 students lived in Silverang-Hallowell properties during the 2008-09 academic year. This year, all 240 rooms will be filled, Trachte said.

But two other developments prevented the college from putting all its students into apartments it owns or controls.

The first was the closure by city housing officials of two fraternity houses, Delta Sigma Phi and Phi Kappa Tau, along College Avenue, earlier this year, said Trachte. The houses need renovations to meet city codes. The owners of the houses, the national fraternal organizations, must arrange for the work to be done.

Twelve to 15 of the off-campus students are upperclassmen displaced by the closure of those fraternity houses, Trachte said.

The second is the on-campus housing pressure created by a larger-than-anticipated freshman class.

Franklin & Marshall is expecting a freshman class of 640 students to arrive Friday. College officials had hoped to get about 575 students — the usual size of a freshman class in the past few years.

Trachte explained that the college gets about 5,000 applications each year. Typically, F&M grants admission to about 38 percent of them, and about one in four of those students accept. A few will "melt away" during the summer and defer college or go elsewhere, he said.

This year, with the weak economy, the college hedged its bets. It received about the same number of applicants, but granted admission to nearly half of them. Surprisingly, about the same percentage as usual accepted, which meant an additional 65 incoming students.

Trachte said the college is already discussing with Silverang the addition of a few properties to his student housing portfolio. School officials said they believe it will benefit the neighborhood to have those properties renovated. That would push Silverang-Hallowell's capacity to 275 to 280 students next year.

That would eliminate the need for students to live in other privately owned apartments.

The students who will live in those off-campus apartments this year are juniors and seniors who applied for a special waiver. Those waivers are not awarded to students with a history of irresponsible behavior, the dean said.

They were allowed to select apartments from a list of preapproved properties and were required to notify school officials where they would be living. Previously, Trachte said, the college did not have an accurate address list for off-campus students or a listing of their landlords.

Most students will be moving in this weekend, he said. Classes begin Sept. 2.

Neighborhood residents, the college and police have had problems in past years with off-campus parties. Trachte said the situation improved last year after the college asserted more control over off-campus housing through the Silverang-Hallowell arrangement.

An analysis done at the end of the school year confirmed that, he said.

"What we saw was a significant decline in noise complaints and a significant improvement in the students' treatment of the properties as well," he said.

From a six-year perspective, Trachte said he was pleased with the changes made to college housing.

"We feel pretty good about it at this point," he said.

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