

THE PLAIN DEALER

BREAKING NEWS: CLEVELAND.COM

★★★

42¢ HOME DELIVERY | 50¢ NEWSSTAND

SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 2008

Saturday, June 21, 2008

The Plain Dealer |

JCU dorms in demand as off-campus costs rise

JANET OKOBEN
Plain Dealer Reporter

The rising cost of everything is bringing students together at John Carroll University.

And how. So many upperclassmen are choosing the dorms over off-campus housing that incoming freshmen are being offered cash to live three to a room in spaces that until now housed only two.

JCU has had trouble filling its dorms in recent years and last year started offering double-occupancy rooms as singles for students who paid a premium. All that changed in recent weeks and one factor appears to be the sharply rising cost of gas

and utilities for students who commute from off-campus apartments.

College officials estimate that 65 percent of JCU's 3,200 undergraduates will bunk on campus next year. That's at least 10 percent higher than previous years.

Brian Williams, JCU's vice president for enrollment, said the bad economy overall is driving more students to choose campus living.

The school also expects a large freshman class in the fall — 800, compared with 720 last year — and two years ago started requiring both freshmen and sophomores to live on campus.

SEE DORMS | A5



ROADELL HICKMAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

This room in Sutowski Hall, on the campus of John Carroll University, is an example of how the college is preparing dorms for more students as the price of off-campus living rises. The room, initially for two students, now is set up to house three.

B LO
EA

DORMS

FROM A1

On-campus housing in big demand

But those changes don't explain the 25 percent increase in the number of seniors returning to the dorms.

The number of bikes stacked up on racks around campus might.

"The bike racks are just full of bikes because kids don't want to get in their car and drive a mile down the road, a quarter-mile," said Jenna Lo Castro, a communications major from Pittsburgh who will spend her senior year in a dorm. "On a college student's budget, I can't afford it. No one can afford it."

Lo Castro said she hears lots of squabbling among students about who turned on the air conditioning or turned up the heat in off-campus apartments. Paying for utilities is a big topic of conversation, as well as "trying to find different ways to transport ourselves without driving," she said.

"On a college student's budget, I can't afford it. No one can afford it."

Jenna Lo Castro,
a communications major from Pittsburgh

"The kids who live off-campus, they're finding it extremely difficult having to commute," Lo Castro said.

Brynn McNicholas, an education major from Kirtland, is returning to the dorms after spending her junior year in an apartment. Cost isn't so much a factor as dealing with a landlord and utilities, so she and her roommate will move back to campus this fall.

"We weren't going to move into another house and have the same worries," she said.

So many upperclassmen opted for dorm life that university officials had to think fast when school ended in May. Older students had already claimed their rooms, so residence hall administrators had to

find a way to squeeze in freshmen.

They're offering \$1,000 off annual room and board fees of \$7,790 and a bookstore stipend of \$800 to first-year students willing to live three to a room.

The arrangement is optional, but the idea has gone over well at orientation sessions, said John Mack, assistant director of residence life.

"With the way we're able to bunk the bed and loft the beds, it actually comes out surprisingly very comfortably," he said.

College administrators everywhere have long argued that living on campus is a better deal because students don't have to sign a lease for 12 months for an apartment they need for only nine. But the notion of a fixed price for a meal plan and no commuting costs seems to be resonating more, at least at JCU, as the cost of food and utilities soars.

For all the talk about the academic benefits of living on campus, Williams said, this current influx is all about saving money.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter:
jokoben@plained.com, 216-999-4535