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Student Commons, Apartments to be Built

8/3/2007

A new “commons” student center and an apartment community will be built for students at Lindenwood University, where leaders say more facilities are needed to take pressure off the crowded dining hall and packed residence halls.

Classes started this fall with about 4,200 full-time students, including about 3,475 who are living on campus, said President James D. Evans, Ph.D.

Lindenwood’s board of directors has approved Evans' plan to build a 2-3 story, \$10 million “commons” student center that would be between 40,000 and 50,000 square feet. Also approved was a plan for 40 apartment-style dorm units on LU’s back 40 acres between Duchesne Avenue and the track and field complex. That project would be completed over an eight-year span and would cost nearly \$20 million.

"Building apartment-style housing that our students crave shows our determination to become even more student-oriented than we have been," Evans said.

The “commons” student center project will include a second dining hall to ease long lines and crowds at the cafeteria in Spellmann Campus Center, Evans said. The new student center will be about half the size of the Spellmann Center and will focus on space for student activities.

Two locations being considered for the “commons” are in the middle of the campus where the “Teahole” or ski lodge building once stood (it was demolished over the summer) or next to the Hyland Performance Arena.

Construction could begin next spring or summer, with the first apartment-style unit and the student center opening perhaps in the fall of 2009.

Apartment-style dorm buildings are in high demand, said Joe Parisi, dean of day admissions at Lindenwood.

"Students ask about it all time," Parisi said.

Lindenwood plans to build five units a year for the next eight years. Each apartment-style room would house two students and include a bathroom, kitchenette and study area.

Evans also presented the board with a “controlled” growth plan that would allow for 75 additional full-time students each year starting in the fall of next year. Fifty of those students would live on campus and 25 would be commuters, he said.

Evans said Lindenwood’s growth over the years has been monumental, and a slower, more methodical growth pattern would allow the university to concentrate on being student-friendly.

"We want to maintain that small college atmosphere but still offer opportunities to students essentially waiting in line to come to Lindenwood," Evans said.

Lindenwood had been growing by more than 150 students per year for past decade.