

UI goes with first-year residency rule

All freshmen will be required to live on campus

By Halley Griffin Daily News staff writer

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The University of Idaho has adopted a policy requiring all freshmen students to live on campus, beginning in fall 2010.

That means the first-year students currently moving their clothes and books into apartments and dorm rooms are the final crop of freshman with the option of living off campus.

Dean of Students Bruce Pitman said the new policy is part of a yearlong effort to increase retention from students' freshman to sophomore years.

"Our motivation is very simple. We're working on a number of strategies to improve students' success for first-year students," he said. "We felt that this is one strategy, not the only one, but one strategy that we wanted to employ to improve students' success among our first-year students."

The new policy is expected to generate nearly \$700,000 annually in extra revenues for university housing and dining services.

The policy has been approved by UI President Duane Nellis and was heard Thursday by the Idaho State Board of Education.

The policy did not need board approval to be enacted, and was instead presented as an information item.

UI data indicates a higher percentage of new students who live in dorms return to the university than do their peers who live off-campus, and is backed by similar research done at Washington State University, which already requires freshmen to live on campus.

"The things I've seen reported are exactly the same kinds of things as why WSU has the freshmen live-in requirement," WSU Director of Housing and Conference Services Bob Tattershall said. "The retention is much greater if they live in university housing their first year."

Pitman said the UI data indicated that only about 59 percent of first-year students who lived off-campus returned for a second year, while 88 percent of their campus-dwelling counterparts returned.

Tattershall said the WSU data indicated that only about 50 percent of off-campus first-year students returned.

"Well that's horrible compared to if you live in a residence hall or a Greek chapter," he said.

He said students' success is directly related to how well they immediately connect to the university.

"And if you don't live in a residence hall or an approved Greek chapter the first year that you're here, you're less likely to make friends, (or) be in a good academic environment," Tattershall said. "Your friends are going to keep going to school, so so are you."

WSU adopted its freshman live-in policy in 1988.

UI senior Christie Wollmuth and junior Amalia Zweerink were helping this year's first-year students move into their dorms Thursday.

Both said they support the new policy.

"It's like an experience to live in the dorms," Wollmuth said. "You share something in common."

Zweerink said living in the Wallace Residential Complex helped her meet people after moving to the UI from Nebraska, and living in the Living Learning Center helped Wollmuth make friends as a transfer student.

"You can get involved in more," Wollmuth said. "As a transfer student I didn't know anyone. There's more social and academic support."

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