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## New Life in New House IWU Students Happy with Life in New Dorm

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## *New Life in New House* **IWU Students Happy with Life in New Dorm**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--With overcrowded halls, screaming students, and blaring rock music, college residence halls are not typically havens of luxury. But for some lucky students at Illinois Wesleyan University, dorm life is far from typical.

With the fall completion of Illinois Wesleyan's latest \$6.85 million dorm, New House, apartment-style living is available on campus.

The four-story, 54,000 gross square foot brick and steel residence accommodates 118 students--sophomores, juniors, and seniors--in various suite arrangements.

"The suite arrangement provides several advantages to students, including the opportunity for closer interaction among smaller groups of students," says Damon Cates, New House director and IWU's coordinator of orientation and retention.

The basic suite unit houses four students in two bedrooms, a living room, a private bath, and walk-in closets. Larger suite arrangements include a six-student, three-bedroom design, and a two-story "townhouse" for eight students, with two bedrooms on each floor.

For some students, the appeal of these suites is simply their newness.

"It was brand new, nothing's been seen before," explains junior economics major and New House resident Pat Holly. "I liked not knowing what I was getting into."

Students say the building's arrangement is also appealing, because it gives them a chance to live separately while still maintaining a community atmosphere.

"It's usually impossible to garner a feeling of community among suite arrangements," explains Holly. "Here you can have it, because the traditional hallways and lounges add that hall aspect that groups students together."

"The advantage in this community living is that you get to know people," adds junior music major Gwen Buchanan, also a resident of New

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## **IWU New Dorm/2 House.**

Students were chosen from a lottery system to live in the new dorm and were required to pay a \$600 surcharge, which is covered in students' financial aid packages.

The extra fee contributes to the dorm's many modern amenities, including enclosed, ground-level bicycle storage, a recreation room, and formal lounges on every floor with kitchenettes and gas fireplaces.

"The fireplaces are great," Buchanan comments. "Everybody likes to study in front of the fire."

Other features include a first floor lounge with a grand piano, balconies on each floor overlooking an atrium, room wiring for the Internet and cable TV, and stackable oak furniture in all rooms.

In addition to these features, students appreciate the dorm's space.

"The ceilings are incredibly high, so you get the impression that you have a lot more space than you actually do," Holly says.

Like any new building, however, New House is not without initial problems. Students could not move into the dorm until it opened just before school began last August and had to go a week without phone service. Other problems involved hot running water and inconsistent cooling and heating systems.

"All of the problems are just minor glitches of a first year hall," says Holly. "There have been no complaints about the setup of the building."

In fact, students seem to believe living in any dorm, regardless of its setup, offers the college student an important advantage.

"You're more in tune with campus life if you live closer to it," states senior biology major and New House resident Jonathan Miller. "If you live off campus, you just don't know what's going on."

Holly appreciates what he calls the "simple living" of dorm life.

"I don't have to worry about bills or parking or getting my car towed," he says. "Everything's been taken care of for me."

Both students and staff believe New House's modern design is necessary to remain competitive with nationwide campus housing trends.

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### **IWU New Dorm/3**

"It's comparable to new dorms being built across the country," Cates says of New House. "I'm sure when our other dorms were built 35 to 40 years ago, they also were considered very luxurious dorms for their time."

"All of the dorms are being upgraded," Buchanan says. "We're just trying to keep up."

IWU Dean of Students Debra Wood believes the new dorm is a reflection of growing college trends.

"Over the past 20 or 30 years," Wood said, "the profile of students has changed. Students used to be born into large families of four to 10 children. Now a four-member family is considered high. Consequently, students have grown up in homes without sharing bedrooms with siblings and homes where they've had their own TVs, Internet hookups, and private phone lines.

"Students have had a very adult, non-student environment at home," she adds. "They want space for their amenities and they're not as comfortable as in the past with floor showers. Privacy has taken on heightened importance."

New House was designed by BLDD Architects of Decatur, Ill. Felmley-Dickerson Co. of Bloomington constructed the building.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts--a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty--opened in August, 1997. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 159 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.