Male dormitory resident complains of sexual discrimination

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Living in the men’s residence halls isn’t easy. Just ask Greg Smith, a seventh floor resident of the McCullough “penthouse.”

Smith, a criminal justice major, can’t believe the difference between the men’s and women’s dormitories.

“The women have stoves, the women have washing machines, the women have larger rooms. They even have sinks in their rooms,” Smith rattled off. “Presently, Bonin, which is the smallest women’s dorm, has the same size rooms as McCullough.”

Smith called the $1,071 each student pays a semester for on-campus housing ridiculous.

“It’s discrimination,” Smith stressed. “I pay the same thing that the women pay. But if I need to do my laundry, I got to take a hike. If I want to cook, that’s too bad.”

John Wales, director of housing, said that Smith chose the option of campus housing.

“He is not being forced to live there,” said Wales.

One of Smith’s biggest complaints was the fact that he was not able to cook for himself on the weekends, forcing him to continually eat out.

“During the weekends and holidays, I have to go out to eat,” Smith explained. “I’m from Los Angeles. I can’t go home for the holidays.”

Wales explained that weekend meal plans were available. These plans are an additional $53 and do not count for vacations or semester breaks.

“I get requests from guys to put kitchens in the men’s dorms,” said Wales. “They are not designed for that. I’m reluctant to put them in because of the chance of fires. Someone may argue that there is just as much of a chance of fire in the girls area. Well, we put microwaves in the men’s area so they would have microwaves, giving them access, too.

“They have actually intentionally broken those,” continued Wales. “I say ‘intentionally’ because it’s kind of hard to break a microwave unless you try, and they have started a fire in one of them. So, if you can start a fire in a microwave...”

“The dorm is falling apart,” exclaimed Smith. “You go up to the seventh floor and look up, there is no (ceiling tiling). There are gaping holes now. In the women’s dorms, they don’t worry about roaches. I have to fight the roaches just to get into my room. I saw a Texas roach that I never want to see again.”

A senior in Health Information Management Misty Martin, who is a resident of Randolph Dormitory, said she dislikes the idea of male-female discrimination.

“I feel it’s extremely unfair that they are paying the same amount of money that we are paying now and they are getting less,” said Martin.

Smith said there is only one immediate improvement he will accept—a refund.

“Refund me $300 off my housing and I’m cool,” Smith said. “If they charged us $300 less than they charged women, that’s enough right there.”

In a conference with Dean of Students Edward Pratt, Smith said he mentioned the possible idea of coed dorms.

“I got the distinct impression that he was saying ‘Look, if I mess with the girls in any way, I’m not going to have the power that I have,’” Smith alleged.

Smith also mentioned the idea of transferring boys to Bancroft while some of the girls get transferred to McCullough—permanently.

According to Smith, Pratt said ‘no’ because “McCullough was too dirty, too run down, too out of the way, and not secure enough for the women to live there.”

“Which doesn’t make sense,” said Smith, “because if it is unsafe for the women, it is unsafe for the men.”

Pratt could not be reached for comment. Vice President of Academic Affairs Raymond Blanco declined to comment on the subject, stating that Pratt would be the only one knowledgeable to answer questions. Later attempts to reach Blanco for comments before press time were unsuccessful.

Martin disagrees with the concept of moving to the other side of school.

“I don’t agree with the idea of moving girls over to the men’s dorms, but they need to make major improvements over there so it can be livable,” she said.

Wales said he would look into the possibility of a future switch.

Wales also mentioned that improvements are beginning to be made on Voorhies dormitory. He said that renovations are being done to the top floors. Those include the conversion of 24 rooms in Voorhies and McCullough to make them twice as large as they are presently by removing the center petition.

“It will be offered as an enlarged double-occupancy,” Wales described. “We don’t know the demand of the rooms, so we don’t know who will be offered the rooms yet. When we know who’s interested and we have more interest than available rooms, we may have to offer some priority.”

Wales said he understood the argument that Smith was making, but stated that the men’s dorms were not built to include washing machines and stoves.

“I didn’t design those buildings and whoever designed them didn’t design them with places for washers and dryers,” said Wales. “I am in the process of possibly looking at placing some washers and dryers on the first floors. The way those dorms were originally designed was that they are to use Kajun Cleaners (located behind Stokes).”

“My whole thing was discrimination,” Smith said. “I pay my money just like the women do. I think the faculty here spends too much time worrying about what the citizens of Lafayette will think about any change they make in this school, and not enough time worrying about what’s fair and what’s not.

“This place here is to build integrity in our students,” added Smith, “and I think it’s failing to do that.”