

The Colby Echo

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MULTICULTURAL HOUSING

CAC SUBMITS PROPOSAL TO PRESIDENT ADAMS

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Despite continued efforts by the administration, some minority students still do not feel safe in their dorms, according to the College Affairs Committee. To ensure these students feel comfortable, the CAC has proposed specialty housing be created as a safe haven for these students.

In 1994 the Board of Trustees decided there would be no theme housing on campus. The CAC has issued this proposal because the College's emphasis on diversity has changed.

Since September 1994, the number of international students on campus has increased from 40 to 109. The number of domestic ALANA students has increased from 140 to 193 and the "gay community has become more vocal," according to the six-page proposal submitted by the CAC to Colby College President William D. Adams Wednesday, Dec. 4.

Efforts within the residence halls such as hall staff training, dorm programming, ensuring that faculty residents be "diverse along ethnic, sexual orientation and racial lines" and using the first-year book to discuss multicultural issues have not been adequate, the CAC claims.

"We still find some students subjected to a variety of indignities in the residence halls, which run the gamut from derogatory comments, to epithets written on message boards, to property destruction, to harassing phone calls," according to the CAC.

In an appendix to the proposal the CAC describes these incidents as they were explained by the Coalition for Institutional Accountability last April. The coalition, composed of Javanese Hailey '03, Juliet Land '02, Elizabeth Parks '03J and Mindy Pinto '02, issued several demands of the trustees

including one for specialty housing.

Some students in underrepresented groups claim they do not have a "safe zone" to live in due to these indignities, the CAC writes.

The special interest housing would be a temporary solution until other diversity initiatives alleviate the need for such housing, according to the proposal.

Adams is currently reviewing the proposal and will decide whether to pass it along to the Board of Trustees. Adams has not had enough time to comment on the proposal, he said Dec. 9.

The new housing would be called "spectrum housing," and would accommodate upperclassmen that want to live with other students who "would make honoring and valuing difference a top priority," according to the proposal.

First-years would not be eligible for spectrum housing so that they will try traditional housing first, Laura Shufelt '03, member of the CAC, said.

The word "spectrum" "delineates we are seeking to honor and respect all persons from all walks of life, ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions, class, etc.," the CAC writes.

The Dean of Students Office would create enough spectrum housing slots to accommodate student demand. Spectrum housing residents would sign a contract indicating their commitment to honoring and valuing difference. The proposal does not explain what this contract would require or if it could be violated. Students currently living in chemical-free and quiet dorms are required to sign contracts.

The CAC has also recommended that trained faculty and staff visit each residence hall within the first two months of each school year to present a "Spectrum Experience Workshop."

"It is clear all resident students need more assistance in learning how to live in a pluralistic society...where all persons are respected and valuing difference is important," according to the proposal.

"Through these workshops, we want to encourage all students to accept their responsibility, as members of this community, to help create a welcoming environment for everyone at Colby."

If implemented, the CAC plans to assess the spectrum housing program after two years to determine if it should be continued, altered or expanded.

Presidents' Council will have the opportunity to comment on the proposal or it can submit its own proposal to Adams.

— College Affairs
Committee Proposal

Student Government Association president Gretchen Groggel '03, who also serves as an ex-officio member of the CAC, said she has not had enough time to review the proposal, but that Presidents' Council would probably discuss it at its next meeting in February.

Brad Kasnet '05, president of Heights, said he was not in favor of the proposal and thought it left many questions unresolved.

"While there may be a little bit of drinking in the chem-free dorms, I don't think that it would be OK if there was a little bit of racism or homophobia in the multicultural house," he said.

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