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Copy Editor

New Residence Ready for Jan. Semester: Residence Services

The new residence currently under construction, which is now almost five months behind schedule, is almost complete says the general manager of residence, food and conference services Mark Braithwaite. Construction of the new residence will be finished in late October with a move-in date for students set for the January semester.

As everyone who has eyes is probably aware, the new residence, which was scheduled to be open in June of this year, is still under construction. Many students were left looking for a place to live in August when they were informed it would not be ready.

"The end date has changed several times along the way with regards to the new residence and I guess from the very beginning when we went out to tender, the contractor Maxim Construction Ltd. gave the university a June 30, 2005 completion date," said Braithwaite. "As the project got underway that completion date moved, it slipped into July, then it slipped into August, it has now slipped into Oct. 28th as the date that the construction company has said they would turn the property over to the university."

Braithwaite says there are several reasons for the delay, none of which have to do with the university, but with the contractor. However, the university chose the contractor based on what is now admitted to have been a very aggressive construction schedule.

"You have to keep in mind, it's not a university-managed project, it's a Maxim Construction Ltd.-managed

project," said Braithwaite. "They went into the ground at the start of Sept. [2004] and to have the building completed for students at the end of June [2005] was very optimistic. Even to have it ready for the first of September was probably optimistic."

Another reason for the delay was the improper installation of a self-leveling concrete flooring material which had to be removed and redone.

"That added a significant amount of time to the project, certainly all the other trades had to wait while the flooring was being installed," said Braithwaite. "But when it had to be removed all the other trades had to back off again. So that delayed the project."

The third reason is according to Maxim Construction Ltd., there has been a challenge getting skilled tradespeople to work on the project. The official date from Maxim for the project to be turned over to the university is October 28. This does not mean it will be open on that date, because the university needs approximately 3-4 weeks to move in furniture, draperies and all the other finishings needed for students. This will

probably push it into the month of November and students should expect to move in for January.

The new residence was supposed to be home to 158 students this semester and the university had to make arrangements to put those students elsewhere, says Braithwaite.

"Even though we had dates that were optimistic, I think we had to have contingency plans in place with residence to deal with the 'what if',"



said Braithwaite. "What if its not ready' and we then made the decision to acquire on a rental basis some of the townhouses across the street from the university at browns court and housed students in there."

"We were expected to decommission Marion hall, the men's residence, at the end of the summer and we were given the authority to keep that building open for the first semester so that we could house students in there. And at that point we were then

up to housing another 80-90 students in those two options and we spread the remainder out across Bernadine and Blanchard hall. There were some people who probably applied late to residence that didn't get into residence because at that point it became full. So we have a full house on campus."

The university is also experiencing a financial shortfall this semester because of the late opening.

"The university itself, we've obviously incurred some financial shortfalls because of this," said Braithwaite. "We haven't got as many students in the residence system as we expected to have. There were people who either decided not to move into residence because we had to turn them away because our inventory was full or there was students who decided not to take the residence option because the new residence wasn't ready and that's all they wanted."

"We also have some contractual obligations with our food service that we would have minimum numbers on the meal plan programs and we haven't met those minimum numbers because the new residence is not open. So there's some financial penalties there for the university because of that. None that are expected to be then turned around on the backs of students because of it."

Whether Maxim Construction Ltd. will be paying any of this shortfall remains to be seen and Braithwaite says they won't know for sure until at least October 28, the alleged completion date.

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