Residence Hall Laundry Room Improvements Beginning in Fall 2008!

Dear Students-

As many of you know (and have indicated to us formally in surveys, meetings, and personal interactions), laundry has been a huge concern in the residence halls. On the 2007-2008 Residence Hall Quality of Life survey conducted at the beginning of winter quarter, laundry was cited as the #1 problematic area in all of the residence halls. Students commented about the small number of machines, dryers that do not adequately dry clothes, machines that are constantly broken, inefficient machines, smelly/dirty machines, and washers that do not spin properly. The College currently purchases and maintains its own machines and the problems in doing so directly mirror the comments we saw on the Quality of Life survey:

- The machines currently used in the laundry rooms are standard, household machines, not commercial grade. The machines are not intended for high volume use, therefore we experience many mechanical problems. Our Facilities Management personnel have done an admirable job of trying to keep up with the problems, but they are balancing responding to laundry problems with a multitude of other campus-wide responsibilities.

- In the laundry business the “industry standard” ratio for number of students/residents to machines is 1:25. Currently our best ratio in one residence hall is 1:31 and our worst ratio in one residence hall is 1:61 and the other four residence halls fall somewhere in between. This has caused a great deal of frustration for students who find that it can be difficult to find a free machine when they need it, and only adds to the already excessive wear and tear on the machines. Moreover, the machines are not large capacity, so students need to use more machines to do laundry.

- The machines currently in use are not energy efficient and are a significant source of water, electricity and gas waste. The College has made a commitment to sustainability, greater climate responsibility and eventual climate neutrality, and laundry is one area where we can make big improvements and take greater responsibility.

With the above issues in mind we started looking at what other colleges and universities in the State of Michigan do for laundry. It was not surprising that we discovered that we are the only college or university in the State of Michigan that functions the way we do. All other institutions that we have been able to find utilize a laundry company to provide laundry service to students. Laundry companies are able to bring in large capacity, high efficiency machines in greater numbers, and provide regular preventive maintenance, and respond quickly to requests for repair of the machines to make laundry a “non issue” for students who have a lot of other things to worry about.

After considering a number of competitive bids, the College has contracted with Great Lakes Laundry and will make the transition to the new, improved laundry system during the summer of 2008. When students return to campus in the fall they will find brand-new large capacity, Energy Star Rated, commercial grade machines (and more of them) in all of the residence hall laundry rooms. The new machines hold 50% more clothes than the current machines and will be operated using a “laundry card.” Students can purchase laundry plans over the summer (a mailer will be sent home) or there will be a card machine in Hicks Center to enable students to purchase cards and a number of washes/dries while on campus. The machines will be priced at $1.25 per wash and $1.25 per dry. Students who purchase a laundry plan during the summer have the ability to reduce the cost down to $1.01 per load (more information will be available this summer). We understand that it is going to be a transition for students to get used to paying per load for laundry, but we hope this new system can better meet our students’ needs, and effectively respond to the issues raised by students in the past. These long overdue improvements will enable the College to provide the laundry resources that students need, at a cost that is lower than local laundromats.

Students with questions are welcome to contact Dana Jansma, Associate Dean of Students, x7210 or djansma@kzoo.edu or Paul Manstrom, Director of Facilities Management, x7308 or manstrom@kzoo.edu. Thanks for your support as we work to continue to improve the quality of life for students living in the residence halls, while taking greater environmental responsibility.

Sincerely,

Dana Jansma     Paul Manstrom
Associate Dean of Students       Director of Facilities Management