

PROPOSAL: Student Housing and Meal Rates 2025/26

Background

Providing an exceptional student experience is the top priority for Western Michigan University's Housing and Dining operations. Building relationships while sharing meals, getting connected with peers through residence hall programs, developing skills and meaningful work experiences as student employees all contribute to our students' overall educational achievement and well-being.

Through formal study, we know that living on campus enhances student outcomes, engagement and persistence. WMU first-year students who live on campus are retained at a rate 11% higher on average than their peers who live off campus. In 2024, 82% of students living in the residence halls agreed or strongly agreed that living on campus supports their academic success, and 95% would recommend living on campus to new students.

For 2024-25, WMU operated 11 residence halls, two dining facilities, eight cafés, four retail locations and four apartment-style complexes. In the fall 2024 semester, 3,967 residents lived on campus, with 83% of first-time, degree-seeking freshmen choosing to live in the residence halls.

The integrated planning and budgeting approach, in place since 2006, provides the resources necessary to accomplish major new builds and facility upgrades to serve our students. A key example of this commitment is the forthcoming Golden Oaks residence hall, which is under development in the Valleys and scheduled to be open for fall 2026.

This year's recommendation continues to support and assist WMU in recruitment, retention and student success efforts. Given current data, proposed housing and meal rates for 2025-26 positions WMU in the lower tier of such pricing among the 15 public universities in Michigan.

Recommended Action

It is recommended the administration be authorized to implement a 4.0% increase to residence hall and meal rates and a 3.5% increase to apartment rates for 2025/26, effective fall semester 2025.