

**PROPOSAL: Student Housing and Meal Rates 2026/27**

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 2025-26, WMU operated 11 residence halls, two dining facilities, eight cafés, four retail locations and four apartment-style complexes. In the fall 2025 semester, 3,815 residents lived on campus, with 84% 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 will be opening fall 2026.

The new, 276,000 square foot residence hall will house nearly 1,000 first-year students and is designed to both embody and enhance the student experience. The project includes two courtyards, one for recreation and another for quiet contemplation. Inside, students will have access to a large, central lounge, community kitchen, laundry, multipurpose rooms, a collaboration hub and a health and well-being studio. Residential wings will feature pod-style rooms as well as study lounges, pod lounges, hybrid learning phone booths and 100% accessible, single occupancy pod bathrooms.

Prior to determining the new residence hall rates, an analysis of on-campus rates and comparable new build residence halls in Michigan was completed. The analysis resulted in new rates for Golden Oaks, a decrease in single rates for traditional Valley and Henry residence halls, and an increase for most other spaces. The proposed 2026-27 housing

and meal rates for existing spaces are projected to position WMU in the middle of such pricing among the 15 public universities in Michigan.

This year's recommendation continues to support and assist WMU in recruitment, retention and student success efforts.

#### Recommended Action

It is recommended the administration be authorized to implement rates for 2026/27, which include the new rates for Golden Oaks, a 3.5% increase to Western Heights, a 3.5% increase to double and continuing single traditional Valley and Henry residence halls, a 5.5% decrease to single traditional Valley and Henry residence halls, a 3.5% increase to apartment rates, and a 3.5% increase to meal rates. These rates will be effective fall semester 2026.