

The Crusader

College of the Holy Cross

February 18, 2011

Construction of a New Holy Cross “Student Life”

By Sara Bovat
Co-News Editor

After last November's media blow-up of the tensions between the College Hill neighborhood and Holy Cross, the spring semester brings a new peace to the Holy Cross community. In the same spirit of this tranquility, the start of a new semester after a rather hectic ending of the last is also the perfect time to begin change.

In a recent letter to the President's Council, Rev. Michael McFarland, S.J. explained that the core problem of the off-campus issues is the lack of an active, on-campus student life, especially compared to other similar schools. However, with the problem being the institution's lack of student activities and entertainment on the weekends leading them to gather in large crowds on Caro Street, the complex issue cannot be solved immediately. In order for the College to build a more appealing and vibrant student life on-campus, it requires a long-term strategic plan that includes the construction of a new student center to replace the existing Hogan Campus Center and create more indoor recreational space. These plans were made with help from outside construction consultants of Brailsford and Dunlavey (B&D) who surveyed and analyzed the students' opinions and then compared the existing facilities to other similar institutions like Boston College, Bowdoin College, Colgate University, Davidson College, Providence College, Villanova University, and Williams College.

Although the current Hogan Campus Center is in a prime location and is extremely accessible for students from all locations, the main concern is that it only serves as a 'campus' center and not a 'student' center. Students do not feel that they can relax and lounge in Hogan because there is not a designated inviting, homey space and serves more for outside conferences and meetings. Father McFarland described how students feel that they are often "visitors" and need a common "Living Room" at their student center with "comfortable seating and lounge space throughout" to make them feel at home. The main goal of the new student space is to serve the multiple purposes of student entertainment, social interaction, outside performances, and formal and informal meeting spaces. Father McFarland explained that instead of trying to force the existing Hogan to carry out functions that it was not built to support, it would be more efficient to

completely rebuild the center so that it can completely cater to the students' desires and needs, while using the free space in Hogan to fulfill other campus needs.

The only place for varsity and club athletes to come together for recreational sports right now is in the Fieldhouse, whose time is starting to come to an end. During the long, winter months, the varsity teams need a place to practice indoors, while there are also needs for informal recreational space for club and intramural sports. Recently, SGA has established "open gym" hours everyday during the week in the Fieldhouse as a way to implement a new option for students to enjoy some leisure time away from the books. The need for a new indoor, recreational space cannot be ignored, especially since the Fieldhouse cannot support the totality of the student body's athletic needs.

In recent years, the development of on-campus housing has caused more of the student body to live on campus instead of on Caro Street, which causes there to be less havoc than before. Therefore, with more on-campus options especially geared towards juniors and seniors, the off-campus life will become less attractive and popular. The construction of the new senior apartments near Mulledy Hall is presently taking place and will be ready for the Fall 2011 semester, which will free up more space for students to remain on campus.

It is clear that many changes and planning need to be done to create a safe, on-campus student life for all years to willingly join in order to substitute the current amusement of off-campus partying. The good attendance to the senior ball's after-party at the pub at the end of last semester and the quietness of Caro Street at night prove that creating this new direction is possible if the College provides more student activities for after 1 a.m., which Father McFarland even recognizes is when the majority of the students' nights just begin on a typical weekend. Although the relationship between Holy Cross and its neighbors is much more cordial than how it was decades ago with 600 students living off-campus, this improvement is only a step in the right direction. With the creation of a new student center, more indoor recreational space, and more on-campus housing options, particularly for upperclassmen, over time, not only will the relationship between the College Hill neighborhood and the institution gradually improve, but so will the overall quality of each Holy Cross student's wholesome experience.