



## HOVA Houses Grads

August 30, 2006

By Elise Kigner  
HATCHET STAFF WRITER

The Hall on Virginia Avenue, a former freshman dorm, will temporarily house graduate students this year while the University considers the best long-term use of the building.

As part of the current Campus Plan, an agreement between Foggy Bottom residents and the University on restrictions to University development, GW made a commitment to remove undergraduates from its off-campus dorms: HOVA, the Aston and City Hall. The Aston will house undergraduates this year and will be used for graduate housing in fall 2007.

This year HOVA will house approximately 200 graduate students at \$700 a month for singles and \$400 a month for doubles, with most rooms serving as singles. Around 420 freshmen lived in HOVA last year. Previously, there was no GW-owned housing available for graduate students.

Every room in HOVA has been taken, said Seth Weinshel, GW director of housing and occupancy management.

"When you have graduate students as residents they have a natural connection to the University," Weinshel said. "This is our first real attempt at that."

Weinshel said demand for housing in HOVA was very high. He added that he thought the building might likely remain as a graduate residence hall.

Executive Vice President and Treasurer Louis Katz said the building is being evaluated for potential use as faculty housing.

Alicia O'Neil, director of real estate planning and development, said Brailsford and Dunlavey, an outside consultant, has been hired to study the best use of the building. Focus groups of faculty members will be used to determine the demand for faculty housing. The costs and architectural feasibility of converting the building to faculty housing will also be examined.

She said graduate housing is only a temporary use of the building.

"It was the logical solution for a population that seeks housing, and we could meet that need," O'Neil said.

Kristin Williams, executive director of graduate student management, said regardless of whether HOVA remains graduate housing, the University will be studying the feasibility of offering faculty housing close to campus.

She said renovations would need to be made to HOVA before it would be suitable for faculty housing. While HOVA is the building they are currently evaluating as a place to house faculty, she said it is not the only building that could be used for that purpose.

Williams said HOVA may not be the ideal place to house graduate students, but offering any graduate housing is a positive change.

"Housing in an urban setting is always a little complicated. I think HOVA is a step in the right direction," she said.

Williams added that offering graduate housing will improve the appeal of GW's graduate programs.

"The availability and cost of housing can be a key factor in their decision to come here," she said. "I think it sends a message to prospective graduate students when there is graduate housing."

Williams noted the size of the graduate population at GW.

"Over half the population at GW is composed of graduate students, but the vast majority of resources go to undergraduate students," she said. "It's the very least the University could do."

Many graduate students, however, already have housing before they start at GW.

Unlike many GW dorms, the rooms in HOVA do not have kitchens. There is one communal kitchen in the basement of the building.

James Morris, an Advisory Neighborhood Council commissioner, praised GW for abiding by the Campus Plan and taking its undergraduates out of housing that is considered off campus.

Morris said he did not anticipate problems with the neighborhood if the building was used either for graduate or faculty housing. He said some neighbors will be unhappy no matter what GW decides to do with the building.

"I think the fact that GW owns the building and that it is beyond the boundaries of campus is a source of contention," he said.

According to the Office of Institutional Research, 60 percent of the graduate population is already living in the D.C. area when they apply to GW. Twenty seven percent hail from other parts of the country and 13 percent are international students.

Patrick Polischuk, a first-year graduate student from California, is living in HOVA this year.

"In my experience, graduates are struggling to get by just as much as undergraduates, and in many cases even more so," he wrote in an e-mail. "Understandably, universities don't feel the need to make sure graduates get the full 'college experience' by living close to campus, but graduates benefit from living close to campus in all the same ways undergraduates do."

*-Brandon Butler contributed to this report.*