



Dorm Life Becomes the High Life

If Chelsea Johnson wanted, she could get an automated wake-up call in the morning, leave her clothes at the concierge desk for dry cleaning, grab some free pretzels and a banana from a snack cart and then unwind in a hot tub with several of her friends.

No Johnson is not living in a high-end condo.

Rather, she is one of the 2,800 undergrad students at High Point University, "where every student gets an extraordinary education in a fun environment with caring people."

At High Point in North Carolina, that means an ice cream truck with free frozen treats, part-time valet parking, live music in the cafeteria, and a birthday card signed by the president with a Starbucks gift card tucked inside on a student's special day. Freshmen don't have to live in dorms with long corridors of bunks beds and communal baths: they live in apartment-like housing.

High Point may be the extreme when it comes to pampering students, but a growing number of schools are offering resort-like amenities: private rooms and private baths with double beds, cleaning service, free laundry, HDTV and 24-hour dining halls with bagels, pizza and fresh fruit, as students and their parents demand more.

With many millennials coming from homes with their own rooms and bathrooms, high-speed Internet, satellite/digital television _ and helicopter parents who took care of cooking and cleaning _ some colleges are finding spartan dorms just don't cut it.

Parents are also seeking more bang for their buck, as the price of tuition and room and board continues to rise, says Jeannie Borin, founder and president of College Connections.

At Purdue, there is always a waiting list for single rooms, says Tom Paczolt, general manager of a new private room, private bathroom residence hall under construction, adding that most of the university housing is shared rooms with communal baths.

The school is constructing the 365-bed residence hall for upperclass students. Students want the privacy of their own room with the benefits of campus living _ secure environment, meal



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plans, cleaning services (the bathroom will be cleaned once a week) and social activities, he says.

Hiromi Makiuchi, 20, a senior at Soka University of America, says her parents were really impressed with the residence halls. She lives in a single, sharing a bathroom with only one other person.

"There's more privacy but you can still connect with your roommate," she says. "I like that better than sharing a room. I think I need my own space."

But while the high life is nice, experts say there is a down side.

Shared rooms, at least for the first year, are an integral part of campus life, says Susan Elsass, vice president of student affairs and dean of students at Daniel Webster College, adding that students in traditional residence halls really get a chance to know each other. The living arrangement also teaches communication and negotiation skills, she says.

Students in single rooms with private baths can become reclusive, spending their spare time talking to high school friends on Facebook, she says. Small colleges also may not be able to afford such nice amenities, she adds.

Nido R. Qubein, president of High Point, says the school has invested \$250 million, most of it in academics: constructing new academic buildings, renovating classrooms and the library, introducing new majors and fields of study. The University has hired 36 faculty members for the 2008-09 school year.

Johnson, a sophomore, says she's getting more than just creature comforts for her \$31,000-a-year bill.

"HPU is no ordinary University by any shot of the imagination and that is why I love it here so much," says Johnson, 19. There are top notch academic programs, a low student teacher ratio (14:1) and lessons in generosity and service, she says.

"Those amenities are the things that grab the attention of visitors to campus," she says. "But when you are here you realize that there is so much more and it makes you go 'wow.'" That's the point, Qubein says.

"When you provide all these services, they love it," he says. "And when they love it, they reward us in the classroom. My message to our students is very, very balanced. There is time to play. There is a time to study. There is a time to be in the classroom and be attentive."