

## **Facilities Management**

While fraternities and social organizations began at Davidson College almost 150 years ago, the buildings on Patterson Court that are now currently leased to our fraternities and eating-houses have been in existence only since 1958. Over time, the facilities of Patterson Court have progressively gotten worse. The organizations that have rented the facilities have not always treated the buildings with the necessary care and respect. As a result, today we are left with facilities that are not a true representation of the quality of experience students have in our fraternities and eating-houses.

### **Why Fraternity and Eating Facilities?**

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a change occurred on the American college campus that caused fraternities to acquire a secondary characteristic: the fraternity house. Initially, the fraternity house was built to accommodate organizations that had grown too large to meet in individual student rooms. The primary function of these houses was to hold meetings as well as to house students during times of housing shortfalls.

A majority of fraternities, eating-houses, and sororities lease or own residential or meeting space; whether that space is a house, lodge, or suite. Nevertheless, the spirit of unity engendered by the “house” concept is evident even with unhoused organizations. Patterson Court (and similar Greek or social communities) exists on college and university campuses to provide this sense of “unity” through discipline, activities, and friendships while matching the educational needs of the institution.

### **Issues Facing Fraternity and Eating-house Facilities**

Fraternities and eating-house facilities can be public relation nightmares. Fraternities and eating-houses must now face the reality that the image that their facilities project and the incidents that happen inside the physical structure directly affect how the college campus and community perceive them. Inter/national fraternity headquarters have a particularly invested interest, as the organization house is a reflection of their greater organization. If a fraternity’s national office looked like a stereotypical “frat house”, the organization would go out of business. It’s a matter of perceptions.

### **An Ounce of Prevention...**

The first step in eliminating the misperceptions is to make a change. It is important that fraternities and eating-houses spend some time and effort to establish a strong building and grounds maintenance and housekeeping plan. A specific schedule should be worked out, with individuals identified to perform the necessary checks and tasks. Take the time to look over the organization’s lease agreement with the College to identify the responsibilities each party plays in facility management and preventative maintenance. For instance, Davidson College is responsible for routine maintenance and for necessary repairs to the interior and exterior of the building and premises, provided, however, that repairs required as a result of damage are charge to the organization. By understanding the responsibilities and expectations in your lease agreement, you will be able to establish a better management for your building. Most preventative maintenance on Patterson Court is handled by the college Physical Plant and Operations Management. However, nobody spends as much time in your organization’s building as you, so here are some tasks your organization should make a habit of doing:

- *Plumbing* problems are a concern that can eventually lead to much damage and higher repair costs. Dripping faucets should have their washers replaced. Fix toilets that run continuously. If you see a water spot on the ceiling, contact Physical Plant immediately to investigate!
- The house should be checked twice a year for insect damage. Davidson College provides an on-going program of pest control that will prevent infestations of insects or vermin.
- The *roof* should be inspected periodically. Stand back from the house and look for broken or curled shingles. DO NOT walk on the roof... let a professional do it. Besides the obvious danger, you may damage shingles by walking on them.
- A licensed electrician should examine *electrical systems*. Very old or frayed wiring should be an obvious problem, but loads placed on particular circuitry are also a critical concern. Major appliance should be kept clean, well lubricated, etc. in order to prevent overheating.
- *Windows* and *doors* should be kept in good condition. The cost of replacing broken windows and doors is quite extensive. If you find a window or door that is broken or not working properly, contact Physical Plant right away to fix the problem (and ultimately reduce your heating bill!).
- *Paint* on wall woodwork should be kept in good condition. Aside from the cosmetic deficiencies created by stains on the paint (walls), it may also result in an organization spending an excessive amount of money on repainting.

Set aside a maintenance budget for damages and some preventative maintenance. In addition, you should set aside some money (i.e., five percent of the total household budget) each year in a reserve account so that money will be available for major house improvements.

Develop a *list of suppliers and service personnel* for maintenance and housekeeping needs. The Davidson College Residence Life Office also has a list of recommended suppliers. Consult other organizations or ask the person or agency for references. Similarly, when planning house improvements, furniture purchases, or other major expenditures, you should check with other organizations. Occasionally, through your communication with other organizations or house corporations, you may find that another organization is selling surplus equipment or supplies, at a substantial savings to the buyer. Always consider, as well, the opportunity to put together a cooperative purchase wherein several organizations pool their orders of equipment or supplies, take bids on the total order, and get a much better price per unit.

*Grounds maintenance* is a frequently neglected element of the overall facilities maintenance program yet one of the most important due to the importance to the outside observer. Appoint an organization officer to oversee the grounds maintenance. Make sure there is no trash, garbage, or furniture on the grounds of the property. Contact the Director of Grounds for Davidson College to set up an appointment to discuss ways to improve the grounds of your house by planting flowers and bushes to improve its appearance.

## **Inventories**

It is important to keep accurate records of the organization's equipment, furnishings, and supplies. Remember to include the kitchen and dining room. At a minimum, inventory should be taken at the beginning and again at the end of each academic year. Don't just "write off" missing items... find out where they've gone! Note the condition of equipment as well. Plan ahead (and budget!) to replace equipment that is expected to wear out in the near future. Often inventories are also required for purposes such as taxes or insurance.

## **When Closing the House...**

1. If you plan to close the house for a vacation period or when you close it for the summer, do it correctly!
2. Check the house carefully for *fire safety*. Remove combustible fluids; clean up trash and debris; clean out storage areas. Unplug all appliances.
3. Make sure all *garbage* is removed from the house and picked up from the premises before leaving.
4. Check the *kitchen*. Stoves and ovens should be clean. The floor should be mopped and degreased. Food preparation surfaces should be sanitized. Storage cabinets, shelves, and refrigerators should be cleaned thoroughly and left open.
5. *Vacuum* all carpets, furniture and draperies. Cover furniture with sheets. Use of commercially prepared moth and/or mildew preventative products is advised.
6. Check all *windows* and *doors*. Allow some light into each room, but examine and secure all locks.
7. Provide the college authorities (*Patterson Court Office, Campus Police, etc.*) with names, addresses, and phone numbers of persons who may be contacted in an emergency.