



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: University of Delaware Board of Trustees  
FROM: Anne D. Neal, President, American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
RE: Residence Life Proposal  
DATE: May 14, 2008

For some weeks now, I have been communicating with several members of the Board about serious deficiencies in the Residence Life proposal, on whose final approval you will be voting on Monday.

As a trustee, you have an obligation to act in the best interest of students, parents, and the taxpayers of Delaware. However, it has come to my attention that several members of the Board have not seen a full copy of the proposal. So that you can make a fully-informed decision, I am enclosing a copy of the latest version.

As you can see, this proposal includes a number of “educational” activities that are very different from the dormitory activities most of us remember from our college days. The plan explicitly says that it seeks to shape and change students’ “thoughts, values, beliefs, and actions” (p. 2).

This will be done by asking students to post answers to highly personal questions—such as for whom they are voting and how they define love—on public bulletin boards (pp. 6, 8), participating in a “simulated ‘shopping’ exercise” on environmental sustainability (p. 10), bringing their “favorite material possessions” to a floor meeting (p. 8), and taking part in a “discovery wheel” activity (p. 14).

I am sure you are aware that last year, activities such as these resulted in students being asked invasive questions—and, when brought to public attention, produced substantial embarrassment for UD. The current plans have also been highly controversial among faculty and students—so much so that an extended Faculty Senate meeting was held earlier this week.

This year, the plan says the activities will be voluntary, but surely you are aware that among college students—especially newly-arrived freshmen—there is tremendous peer pressure to do what others do. With that in mind, you should not approve a potentially troublesome program and leave it to students to opt out.

The above “educational” activities constitute one third of the total plan. If you believe that they may place the intellectual climate at UD at risk—or that they are not the best possible use of taxpayer and tuition dollars—I hope you will exercise due diligence at Monday’s meeting. You can very easily approve a plan for Residence Life that only includes more traditional residence hall pastimes, such as safety orientations and pizza parties, outlined in Appendix 1.

I hope that this will be helpful to you, welcome any questions you may have, and thank you for your service to the University of Delaware.