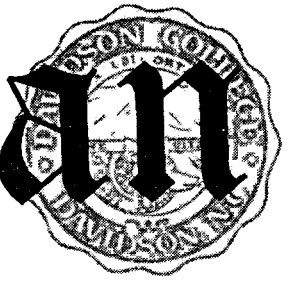


The Davidsonian



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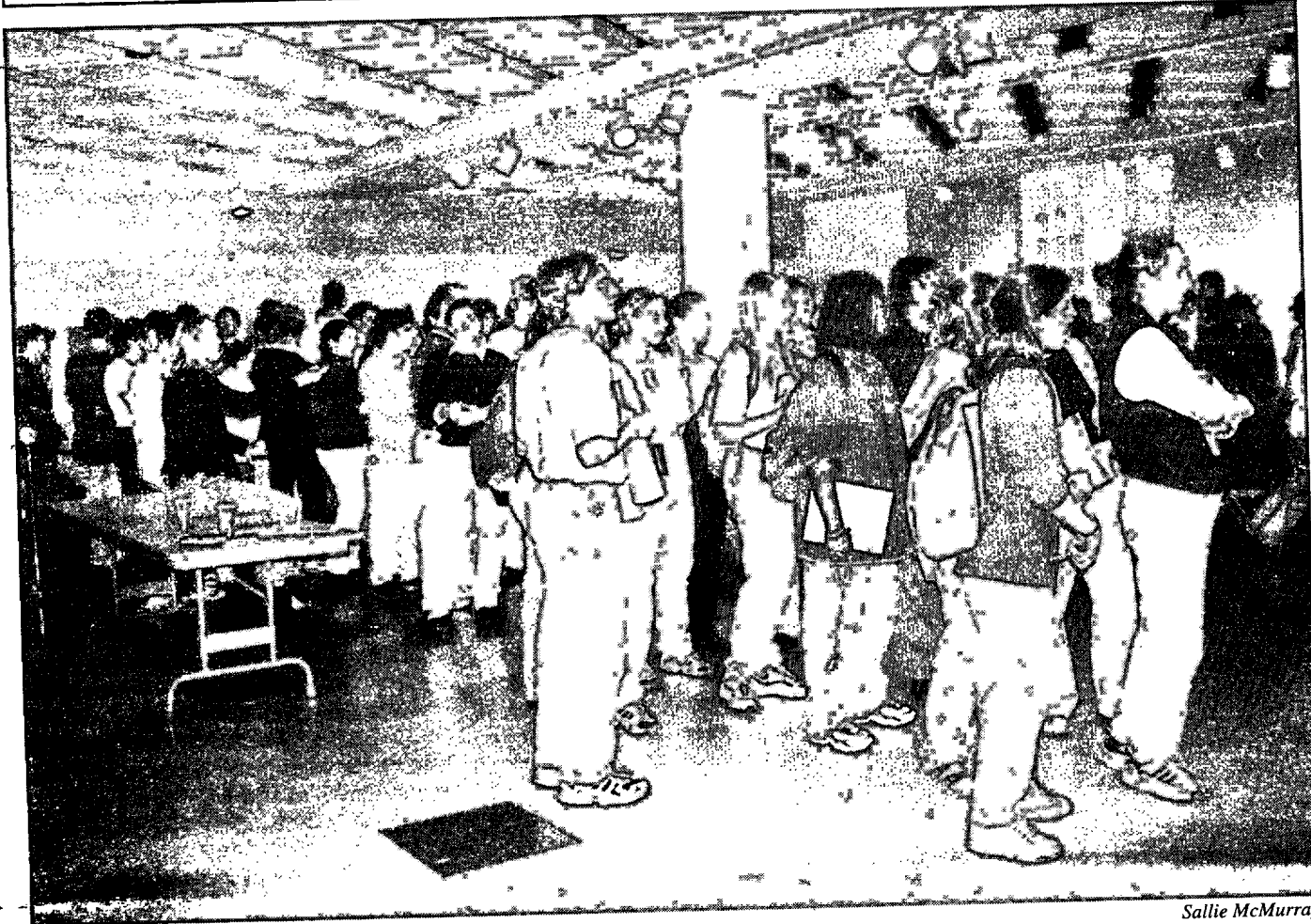
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◆ Students waited in line last Wednesday to choose their rooms for next year. Although some students were wait-listed, Holmes feels positive about their chances of getting a room.

Lottery Night successful despite 22 on wait list

By RACHEL WIPPOLD
Staff Writer

Last Wednesday night answered the question burning in students' minds since receiving their fluorescent yellow copies of the "1998-99 Lottery Booklet." Now not only do most students know with whom they will live next year, but also where. Students gathered in Chambers Gallery on Mar. 25 for Lottery Night, anxious about whether they would receive their first choice, or if they would have a room for next year at all.

Before Lottery Night, many first-time lottery participants expressed concern about the difficulty of the process. However, numerous students were surprised by the ease and swiftness with which they chose a room. Freshman Jessie Brown, experiencing lottery for the first time, stated her feelings with relief: "Dang! That was easy. They made it out to be so complicated."

Kurt Holmes, Director of Residence Life, also shared incredulity at the efficiency and order of Lottery Night. He seemed pleased that it remained peaceful throughout the selection of rooms. Holmes remarked that, similar to the past, Duke Residence Hall went to students fastest. However, the similarities to previous years ends there. Usually Sentelle, then rooms down the hill, are snapped up next. This year, with the exception of Duke, rooms remained in each building at an equal ratio until the last group of students passed through. Holmes postulated that this was partly due

See *Lottery Night* on page 2

RLO responds to theme living controversy

By LIZ NEHEISEL
News Editor

Since its original proposal last fall, theme living at Davidson has grown from a virtual unknown to the most hotly contested topic for debate since the sorority issue. The possibility of theme living came to fruition last semester, when the Residence Life Office advertised theme living for the 1998-99 school year.

Assistant Director of Residence Life Deanna Jordan played a key role in bringing the program to campus and acts as director for theme halls. "The whole point of theme living is to give students the opportunity to make a connection between what goes on in the classroom with what goes on outside the classroom," said Jordan.

An integral part of theme living serves to expose students academically and culturally to topics of interest outside of a traditional academic setting. The stated purpose and mission of theme living is to "offer students increased opportunities to make connections between their lives inside and outside of the classroom." This goal directly relates to RLO mission statement: "The Residence Life Office at Davidson College is dedicated to providing an environment for students that supports and advances their academic performance, provides co-curricular learning opportunities, and encourages individual so-

cial development. The Residence Life Office fosters the establishment of communities where individuals are respected, diversity is promoted, and students learn from one another."

Directly related to these goals, the application states, "Each Theme Living group should create an environment conducive to helping its members meet their individual and community goals, as well as providing a new dimension for the college community."

Advisors to the program, including program faculty advisor Magdalena Peña, showed concern about groups removing themselves entirely from mainstream Davidson.

"We did not want any theme to cluster off into its own world and stop interacting with the rest of the world," said Jordan. Safeguards against such an occasion are included in the application process. Students are required to recruit at least one faculty advisor and identify a program chair who will work directly with the Residence Life Office. Program chairs must help to develop a comprehensive living environment. Themes must offer programs open to the public on a regular basis, whether that public encompasses the hall, the building, or the entire Davidson community. Other safeguards include a yearly evaluation process by faculty, students, and RLO professional staff.

The application itself delineates several proposal requirements, includ-

ing a statement of goals and objectives of the theme, statement of organization, summary of program possibilities which exhibits continuity, a signed roster of student members and designated chairs, and a statement of the community impact. A primary consideration in the evaluation process concentrates on whether the theme has a positive impact on the residents and surrounding community.

A further concern of the students was how theme living would affect diversity on campus. RLO directors purposefully required that all themes be academic to hopefully avoid this occurrence. "We already have a kind of clustering that goes on, which is why we limit fraternity and eating house members on the same halls. Nonacademic themes don't really have a place here right now," said Jordan.

"I think that some students really fear that the diversity is being taken away from their hall because one of these groups is primarily African American students," continued Jordan. "But these students are not living together for social reasons. They're living together for more academic reasons. The whole basis of them living together in a group is for discussion about the two different themes they have."

Jordan hopes to encourage this discussion within the groups and with outside guests. For example, the African American Culture and Society

theme houses both African American and Caucasian students. This diversity enhances the theme demographically and allows for developed discussion. Jordan has suggested that the Christianity and the Teachings of Jesus Christ theme invite members of diverse faiths to engage in conversation.

Jordan said, "There are certainly social benefits for the students who are living together in these two themes, but those benefits would exist for any theme."

The question of diversity and its implications has evolved further in recent opinions articles of The Davidsonian. "I think what we're seeing now at Davidson for the first time since I arrived last summer is a real, true discussion about race relations. I don't want the concept of theme living and this discussion to become so intertwined that they become one issue," said Jordan.

"Because both of these themes don't have their own academic departments per se, I think there is some misunderstanding about what these themes mean. Students don't recognize how these themes are true academic focuses or studies because we've never had that academic department here."

Jordan stated that some of the opposition may be due to a fear of change. "Students have such ownership in Davidson and what it's all about, so they get very scared when you start

talking about changing what's already there," she said. "But this doesn't need to be something that every student at Davidson wants. If you're not interested in theme living, don't participate in it."

Theme living, similar to the program offered at Davidson, currently exists on several of Davidson's peer institutions and various North Carolina education establishments, including Wake Forest, Duke University, Elon College, and the University of North Carolina system.

"Theme living is not going to have an impact on every student at Davidson. If students choose not to participate, they don't have to participate," said Jordan.

"If this theme living experience brings to the students who are participating in it a fuller experience at Davidson, we'll have met one of our biggest goals, because that's what it's all really about."

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"We did not want any theme to cluster off into its own world and stop interacting with the rest of the world."

DEANNA JORDAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RESIDENCE LIFE