

ENVISIONING

innovative ways for students to feel at home, through renovations that bring the neighborhood concept into residence halls



This Old Dorm

**Students Work and
Play in a Place
More Like Home**

Builders of new homes nowadays often include something in their floor plans called The Great Room. More than the traditional living room, it's one of those multipurpose spaces where a family gathers to play games, watch movies, eat snacks, read quietly, and make music loudly.

A Great Room equivalent now exists for the family of students who make the east side residence halls their home. The dark spaces of the former Currier food service, closed except for one study space for the past 12 years, have been transformed into airy, colorful community rooms, where students now play pool, use computers to write term papers, work out on treadmills, or watch other students act in comedy sketches.

"Just having light and comfortable furniture makes a big difference," one first-year student says of the Currier Hall renovation. "It's very inviting, and it's comfortable enough to make you want to stay."

There's much more to the \$3.6 million Currier project than furniture, however. More than 2,600 square feet were renovated on the first floor of the 90-year-old dormitory. Changes include a fitness room with 28 pieces of workout apparatus, a study lounge that opens onto a newly landscaped green-space, and a state-of-the-art stage and

video facility. Other attractions in the Currier addition include a pool table, a foosball table, air hockey, various arcade games, vending machines, and a new Instructional Technology Center with double the number of computers—50—that existed in the previous facility in Stanley. All of the amenities are available, free, to all dorm residents.

"Students always have a place to go," says John Josten, assistant director of facilities and operations for Residence Services who oversaw the project. "In the short time it was open [between its April 18 opening and the end of the school year in May], students really enjoyed working and playing in the new space."

The project is part of a focus on creating campus neighborhoods, areas where students can take advantage of a wide array of social opportunities and other options close to where they live. While these facilities were constructed with the students of Daum, Burge, Stanley, and Currier residence halls in mind, they are open to all students, as well as to faculty and staff.

While workers have created a new space that brings students together for fun, the central mission of the University—academics—hasn't taken a back seat.



“Our study space used to be very drab and bleak,” a second-year student says. “Now the environment is inviting. It’s bigger, so we don’t have to fight for space. In my room, the phone is always ringing, or someone is stopping by. And it’s totally quiet in the study lounge, which makes it easier to concentrate.”

Opened in 1914, Currier was the first UI residence hall. Room and board at the time was \$22.50 per semester. Originally, it was all female and housed roughly 180 students, but in 1971, it became coed. The original structure consisted of what is now the main entrance and half of the south and east hallways, but it was a 1949 addition of a new wing that completed the U-shape and expanded capacity to 780 students. In fact, with the 1949 expansion, Currier Hall became the largest women’s residence hall at Iowa and one of the biggest in the Midwest.

The hall was named to honor equally the contributions of Amos Noyes Currier and Celia A. Moore Currier. Naming the new hall for women for the Curriers was particularly appropriate, since both were fervent supporters of equality in educational opportunities for women. Amos Currier, who served the University for more than 40 years as professor of Greek and Latin, dean of lib-

eral arts, and librarian, was acting president for one year until George E. MacLean took over in 1899. Celia Currier, Amos’s wife, was an instructor in Latin from 1869 to 1874, a period when women were not allowed faculty rank. She continued to assist her husband in his academic work and was active in University and community efforts.

When the residence hall bearing their names was first opened, among its residents was the dean of women, “who kept a watchful eye on dormitory life,” according to the book *A Pictorial History of The University of Iowa*. A year later, English instructor Florence Livingston wrote in the *Iowa Alumnus*: “At Currier Hall were warmth and jollity and sympathy and friendship—nourished and sheltered in something that very nearly approached the snug security of home.” She also observed that “the Currier Hall girl is no angel of perfection. I suspect she consumes fudge in larger quantities than the family physician would advise.”

Whether their family physicians would approve of their college eating habits is a matter eastside residents can ponder when they visit a remodeled food service at Burge. When construction ends in August 2004, the Burge dining hall will more closely resemble the revamped Hillcrest dining area

on the west side of the campus. The food marketplace design will feature a variety of serving stations that offer entrees from macaroni and cheese to tomato-basil fettuccini and Indonesian noodles.

Currier Hall features many new amenities, including a fitness room outfitted with 28 pieces of training equipment, a stage wired for sound, and a technology center filled with 50 computers.

