VCSU Uses Extra Dorms During Project

Valley City State University has renovated Robertson and Mythaler Halls this summer so there will be a place for students to stay while a $3.2 million major renovation project is completed on Snoeyenbos Hall.

Residence halls that will continue being used while Snoeyenbos is being renovated are Kolstoe and McCoy halls.

Glen Schmalz is VCSU vice president for student affairs, which includes housing.

Schmalz said Monday normally 130 to 140 students are housed in Snoeyenbos. Using Robertson and Mythaler halls this year will provide “barely enough room. We do have a contingency plan that would have us put any temporary overflow in area motel rooms. We do have a policy that all new freshmen live on campus, so we would expect upperclassmen would be temporarily placed in motels if needed, and freshmen would stay on campus.”

VCSU has a rule requiring new freshmen to live on campus.

Stephanie Roelfsema, assistant housing director for VCSU, said Monday, “We do have Snoeyenbos Hall being renovated during the 2010-2011 school year.”

“To accommodate the students, we’ve given a face-lift and prepared two buildings for occupancy this year: Robertson and Mythaler Halls,” Roelfsema said.

The Head Start program is housed on the first floor of Mythaler hall, and the remaining space (in Mythaler and Robertson halls) “was sitting empty,” Ron Pommerer, director of facilities services for VCSU, said Monday.

Roelfsema said, “Work done this summer on Robertson and Mythaler halls include new carpeting, painting and new furniture. We think we’ll be able to accommodate all of our students there.”

As of Monday, “they are ready to go” for students to move in, Roelfsema said.

Some students started moving in over this weekend, more moved in Monday, “and the bulk are moving in (today),” Roelfsema said.
Schmalz said, “It has become an expectation of students and parents for modern and up-to-date residence hall spaces. Most young people today grew up having their own individual spaces including bathrooms and they have an expectation of privacy, and where they are going to be staying for the next nine months is a deciding factor (in selecting a university). We’re taking it to the next level.”

Schmalz said VCSU has involved students in the renovation project. “Students have been part of the design team, and they’re having quite a bit of say in the project.

Schmalz said some people might ask why VCSU has decided to renovate rather than build new. “These are good, solid buildings,” he said.

Jon Backes, president of the North Dakota Board of Higher Education, said Monday, “It is an interesting project and a good one for VCSU. It takes a 40-year-old facility and makes it up to date.”

The project is not being paid for with state funds. “It is being financed through bonding, and in interest rates are good right now,” Backes said.

Although no state money is going into the project, it was approved by the State Board of Higher Education. “I think it is a prudent investment for VCSU. Things we (the Board of Higher Education) look at when approving projects include is it necessary and does the institution’s financial situation justify the amount being spent. Both these are being met in our opinion. North Dakota is fortunate to be in economic situation most of the country is not experiencing.”

In a column posted on the VCSU website, President Steve Shirley wrote the project will result in significant modernization to a building constructed in 1971.

Shirley said the work will be similar to 2004 renovations to Kolstoe Hall, “resulting in a completely upgraded interior. All rooms in Kolstoe are now suite-style, and additional enhancements in the common areas were also made.”

“The cost of the project is being funded through student residence hall fees; no state-funded dollars are allocated for an auxiliary project such as this. Snoeyenbos has been maintained very well and is in excellent condition, but this will be the first major renovation during its 40-year history.

“The traditional residential rooms will be converted into suite-style rooms with refreshed common areas and private restroom facilities.”

Robertson and Mythaler halls “have not housed students in several years, so it will be exciting to once again have VCSU students living in those buildings. As we continue to build enrollment over the next few years, we look forward to re-opening an upgraded and improved Snoeyenbos Hall in fall 2011 to welcome the VCSU Class of 2015,” Shirley wrote.