

# LIVE AND LEARN

Housing and Dining Services **extends learning beyond the classroom** and into K-State's residence halls and dining centers.

BY ALISON POLLOM ROGERS '02, HOUSING AND DINING SERVICES  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOUSING AND DINING SERVICES



Wefald Hall (above and bottom) is expected to be complete in the fall. Included in the state-of-the-art facilities will be traditional-private rooms — both in Wefald and the freshly remodeled West Hall. Residents in these rooms will have access to restrooms with individual units containing a sink, toilet and shower, in addition to the bay of sinks commonly found in community bathrooms (below).



Ask someone to describe on-campus housing, and you'll probably get a shrug and a sentence or two describing it as a convenient place to eat and sleep while pursuing a degree. You may hear the stereotypical scenario in which two, three or more students occupy the same room and share a bathroom with little privacy. A dining center with a few lines of ready-to-eat options that were prepared back in the kitchen and prep areas.

If you were to request the same of a representative from Kansas State University's Department of Housing and Dining Services, you'd learn that living on campus isn't what it used to be.

## SERVING STUDENTS OF TODAY — AND TOMORROW

As Housing and Dining Services began planning Wefald Hall, its first new residence hall in five decades, it became clear that the department was presented with the perfect opportunity to re-evaluate its philosophy as well.

In keeping with the university's visionary goal to be recognized as one of the nation's Top 50 public research universities by 2025, Housing and Dining Services would grow and evolve alongside the rest of campus by offering the level of accommodation expected by today's — and tomorrow's — generations of students. ▶▶



### WEFALD HALL AT A GLANCE

- 540 beds
- 129,000 square feet
- Eight floors
- Primarily two-student standard rooms with multiple single-use bathrooms on each floor
- Rooms will be clustered together with dedicated study space in common areas on each floor
- Smaller communities with fewer students per staff member



K-State students find it easy to meet others and stay connected academically when they live on campus.

►► “Modern campus communities often integrate academics with the traditional necessities of living, such as meals and a clean, safe, comfortable place to hang their backpacks,” said Derek Jackson ’92, ’15, assistant vice president and director of Housing and Dining Services. “Residential learning communities, or living-learning communities, are now widely seen as the future of campus housing.”

The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International defines residential learning communities as “a residential education unit in a college or university that is organized on the basis of an academic theme or approach and is intended to integrate academic learning and community living.”

To complement the educational programs already in place within the residence halls, the department reached out to K-State First, a program devoted to helping students make the most of their first year at K-State. Building on the program’s Connecting Across Topics Communities concept, often called CAT Communities, residence life



Students walk near Jardine Apartments, which houses more than 1,500 residents from about 50 countries.

staff introduced Residential CAT Communities to — in a sense — create smaller communities within communities. Residential CAT Communities support students through their freshman year to create a solid foundation for the remainder of their university experience.

Adding a learning component to student living quarters makes sense, but some may be surprised to learn that it’s every bit as important to the department’s dining team. ►►

## MAKING CAT CONNECTIONS

Housing and Dining Services, as the name suggests, is in the business of hospitality.

Webster’s defines hospitable as “offering a pleasant or sustaining environment,” and one of the ways in which the department sustains its students is by connecting them with important resources. Through a partnership with K-State First, a program devoted to bringing first-year students together and increasing their involvement and sense of belonging on campus, Residential CAT Communities were born.

Residential CAT Communities provide an added opportunity for first-year students to connect with others who share their academic interests by placing them in the same residence hall.

About 20 first-year students not only take a group of classes together but also live, eat, sleep, study and socialize near each other.

Combine that with an experienced, live-in residential learning assistant to answer questions and mentor the group, and you have a student with the tools needed to advance.

“We are fortunate to have a strong partnership with K-State First through which we can deliver a menu of CAT Communities to students living in the residence halls,” said Stephanie Bannister ’09, associate director of student living. “This approach builds connections to both content and people in a way that we know directly leads to retention of students. As an instructor for the STRENGTHS CAT Community, I see firsthand how students grow in confidence and are then able to navigate the university experience with a high degree of success.”

**MORE**  
For information more about Residential CAT Communities, visit [www.K-State.edu/cat/residential](http://www.K-State.edu/cat/residential).

►► STATE-OF-THE-ART DINING FACILITIES

Dining services entered the design phase of its new Kramer Dining Center knowing that, though the possibilities were endless in the state-of-the-art facility it was gaining, it would preserve its unique national reputation for made-from-scratch meals containing ingredients from as close to Manhattan as possible. This includes meats from the USDA-inspected facility at Weber Hall, milk from the dairy processing plant located inside Call Hall, flours from wheat milled nearby in McPherson and Salina, and locally grown produce when available.

Dining leaders brought the community focus inside as well, approving a contemporary design for the center’s serving and seating areas that encourages socialization and group dining. This modern layout also allows students a more participative dining experience as the food is made in front of them at about a dozen stations (American classics, deli, pasta, southwest, grill, etc.) arranged around the main floor. There, they can learn about preparing good food as they watch. But the educational aspect of Kramer doesn’t end there.

From the very beginning, dining services management staff, many with joint faculty appointments in the College of Human Ecology, knew it was time to add a teaching platform. Department chefs and faculty members can now host presentations and workshops to boost students’ knowledge of nutrition, sustainability, cultural foods, emerging cuisines and other culinary concepts. Options will continue to be available for students following Dietary Guidelines for Americans (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and MyPlate (USDA) principles, but an action station in Kramer will feature creatively prepared plants and grains in an effort to increase the consumption of plant-based foods, a common theme in developing healthful eating practices.

Mary Molt ’95, associate director of Housing and Dining Services, said she is excited for the opportunity to open a dining center that is designed to provide students a dining experience that will surely be a highlight of their college years.

“I’m proud of the entire Housing and Dining Services team for designing a facility that will keep education at the center of all we do,” Molt said. 🍴



Diners can order burgers such as the award-winning Goodnow at JP’s Sports Grill. JP’s features six burgers on its menu, each named after a residence hall on campus.

THE SECRET’S OUT

No longer Manhattan’s best-kept dining secret, JP’s Sports Grill at Jardine Apartments serves some of the city’s best sandwiches, wraps, salads and more. The restaurant’s spiral-cut fries go perfectly with JP’s specialty: its gourmet burgers (also from Weber Hall) and house-made pretzel buns. There are six burgers on the menu, each of which is named after a residence hall on campus. The Goodnow, a mouthwatering combination of deep-fried banana peppers, chipotle mayo, pico de gallo and melted pepper jack, was listed as one of the area’s seven best burgers in the winter 2015 issue of *313 magazine*, a regional publication devoted to showcasing life in the Flint Hills.

**MORE**  
For JP’s menu and hours of operation, visit [housing.k-state.edu/dining/retail](http://housing.k-state.edu/dining/retail).

**KRAMER DINING CENTER AT A GLANCE**

- More made-to-order preparation
- Extended meal hours
- Designed to serve a student population of 1,850
- Additional retail space and design for dining-hour flexibility



JP’s is a popular place to eat on gamedays, with many fans stopping in on their way to the sports complex and others coming to catch the game on one of the restaurant’s many TVs. Watch for a second location to open at the K-State Student Union following renovations.