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Another Win for the

MIGHTY MACS

Kerry S. Jones likens his flexible solution for the housing crunch at **Immaculata University** to the inventive game play employed by the school's unlikely 1970s basketball dynasty

by Joe Dytton



“It is our belief that these new facilities create a living environment that engages a higher percentage of our students to stick around campus on evenings and weekends.”

Kerry S. Jones, Director of Capital Planning and Construction

▲ Bridges extend from the middle level of each of Immaculata University’s West Campus Housing buildings, minimizing travel between floors on moving day.

When Cathy Rush came to Immaculata University in Malvern, Pennsylvania, in 1970 to lead the Mighty Macs women’s college basketball team, the odds were stacked against her in more ways than one. She was just 22 years old, her players had no home court because their gym had recently burned down, and their talent pool was small, given that the school only had about 400 students at the time.

One thing Rush and her team had that their opponents didn’t, though, was a greater level of insight about where the game of women’s basketball was going. The rules had recently changed from six players per side on the court to five, and there was also a new 30-second shot clock to contend with, so Rush trained her team in an aggressive new style of play that entailed pressure de-

fense and lots of fast breaks for points. The result was a 149-15 record from 1972 to 1977, including six consecutive Final Four appearances and three consecutive Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women national championship titles from 1972 to 1974.

Today, Immaculata’s director of capital planning and construction, Kerry S. Jones, is employing ingenuity of his own to once again beat the odds as the school works to expand its housing options to accommodate growing enrollment despite a limited budget. Working with the money he’s been allotted, Jones is developing the university’s West Campus Housing as apartment-style residences that will flexibly accommodate new students.

The buildings—known at the school as “pods”—each include six apartments, and

**BY THE NUMBERS
WEST HOUSING
CAMPUS**

10

total building plots planned

2

buildings completed during the first phase

3

stories per building (approx. 11,000 sq. ft. in size)

6

apartments per building

5

single-occupancy bedrooms per apartment

each of those contains five single-occupancy bedrooms, two full bathrooms, and a kitchen. The apartments are also fully furnished with dishwashers, refrigerators, full-size washers and dryers, and 40-inch flat-screen TVs. And, outside, the buildings' entrances are connected at midlevel to pedestrian bridges that extend to the sidewalk, eliminating extraneous stair climbing or long elevator waits on moving day. "Having put five of my own children through college, I remember those painful move-in and move-out days from the typical dormitories," Jones says.

The school opted for this pod-style housing both to accommodate a demand for apartment-style residences and because it allowed for more control. If the school had instead worked with a third-party developer, that company might have built 300 units all at once, maintained ownership of them for years, and collected all the rent. Such an arrangement would have left the school on the hook to guarantee occupancy rights while collecting little revenue. "So, our idea was to build units without any third-party interventions in a progressive or phased manner as we actually needed the beds," Jones says. "I coined the term 'on-demand housing.' We chose to build 60 new beds on campus in our first phase."

The school has been operating the housing for less than a year, so there have been no official surveys yet to gauge student reac-



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- ◀ The apartments are furnished with a host of appliances, including dishwashers and full-size fridges.
- ▼ The homes are Immaculata's latest win. Its women's basketball team won three national titles in the '70s.



- ◀ Immaculata hopes its new housing will encourage students to stay on campus more often.

tion, but according to Jones, word on the street is positive. He remembers during move-in day that a student's

mother told him that her daughter was the youngest of four and that none of her sisters had had the chance to live in such a wonderful apartment. When the mother and daughter walked into the apartment and looked around, they even hugged each other and cried. "That actually brought a small tear to my own eye, and it was then that I knew we had hit the nail on the head," Jones says.

As each phase of West Campus Housing is completed, Jones expects more positive feedback, and he acknowledges that a lot of it is thanks to architectural firm Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates (CRA) and contractor Kinsley Construction, both of whom played key roles in making the project a reality. "Grandiose design concepts are easy to come

by, but design concepts that can be proven financially viable given very tight budget restrictions are the mark of only the best architects," Jones says. "[And,] we could never have brought this project in on time, on budget, and on quality if it were not for the very fine folks at Kinsley Construction who rolled up their sleeves and, in many cases, put their own skin in the game to ensure an absolute success."

For a long time, Immaculata, like other small colleges, has seen many of its students head back home the second they get out of class on Fridays. With its new apartment-style housing, though, it hopes to see its campus a little more populated on the weekends. "It is our belief that these new facilities create a living environment that engages a higher percentage of our students to stick around campus on evenings and weekends so that they might more holistically benefit from this once-in-a-lifetime college experience," Jones says. ■

A MESSAGE FROM CRABTREE, ROHRBAUGH & ASSOCIATES

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