Four-Year Residential Experience
Rationale and Research

Overview

The College of Saint Benedict, as part of a multi-dimensional plan to be recognized as a premier liberal arts institution, plans to establish a four-year residency requirement and an enhanced, complementary four-year residential experience beginning in fall 2010. The four year residential experience is about more than room and board. It is the total campus experience that includes student activities and opportunities, campus policies, dining, recreation and fitness, and academic collaboration. Saint John's University has implemented a corresponding program beginning with the class that entered in Fall 2008.

Top Liberal Arts Colleges

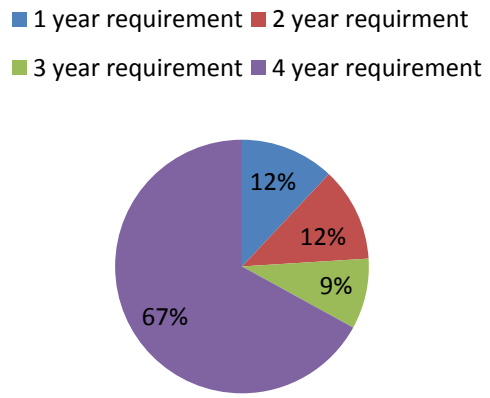
The College of Saint Benedict is the only nationally ranked Catholic, liberal arts college for women. As we look ahead to the future, we have identified characteristics that are necessary for us to achieve a greater level of national recognition as a premier liberal arts institution. College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University benchmark against a subset of the Top 100 Liberal Arts Colleges listed by *US News and World Report*. The vast majority of these institutions, including College of Saint Benedict, are members of the *Annapolis Group* of the nation's most prestigious liberal arts colleges. Our benchmark set of peers and aspirants has characteristics similar to us and characteristics that we aspire to relative to our niche market and student population.

Among the commitments we have made to attain consistent recognition among our target population of students and brand association with our peers and aspirants is to increase the percentage of students who live on campus for all four years (including those living abroad). Since an overwhelming majority of our students already lives on campus, an increase in the proportion of students who live on campus translates effectively into a four-year residency requirement. The vast majority of our national peer and aspirant institutions have four-year residency requirements as outlined in Table 1 and Figure 1. (See Appendix A for a list of peer and aspirant institutions.) College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University are unusual among our peers and aspirants in not having a four-year residency requirement.

Table 1

Years of required residency	Total	Total Percent	Peers	Peers Percent	Aspirants	Aspirants Percent
1 year	9	12%	5	11%	4	14%
2 years	9	12%	4	8%	5	17%
3 years	7	9%	5	11%	2	7%
4 years	50	67%	32	70%	18	62%

Figure 1: Percent of institutions



Local Liberal Arts Peers and Aspirants

Our national peer and aspirant list does not include all of our local liberal arts peer, aspirant, or aspiring-to-be-like-us institutions. The data in Table 2 list those institutions. Carleton and Macalester are not included on our national aspirant list because at the present time it is not realistic for us to strive to achieve their national status. St. Olaf is included on our national aspirant list, Gustavus Adolphus is included on our national peer list. Concordia-Morehead is not included on either list because they are ranked as third tier. While we track enrollment and financial aid data for College of Saint Catherine, University of St. Thomas, and the University of Minnesota for purpose related to direct enrollment competition, we do not include them on our peer and aspirant lists because they are not undergraduate liberal arts colleges. In other words, we do not aspire to be like them relative to our national brand.

Institution	Residency Requirement	Notes
Carleton College	4 years	
Gustavus Adolphus	4 years	
St. Olaf College	4 years	
St. John's University	4 years	Implemented Fall 2008
Macalester College	2 years	Space limitations; website reveals tension about students wanting to live on-campus; also different environment with different amenities
Concordia-Morehead	2 years	
College of Saint Benedict	2 years	Implementing 4 year in 2010

Current Status

College of Saint Benedict currently houses between 80% and 85% of its students on campus in any given year. Our residence halls have been 100% occupied for the past several years, and we have excess demand for on-campus living. Implementing a four-year residency will mean housing between 90% and 95% of our students on campus. The gap between housing 90% and

100% of students on campus allows for revenue flexibility in years when enrollment goals are not achieved. For example, if we were to plan to house 100% of 2000 students, and we enrolled 1900, we would have 100 empty beds. If instead, we plan for 2000 students, with housing for 1800, and we only enroll 1850, we will still fill all of our beds, and 50 students will have to live off-campus. Maintaining this flexibility will require a system for exempting students from residency based on specific criteria (e.g. senior standing, academic good standing, no conduct violations, personal circumstances, internships, etc.). Such a system provides senior students with a possible option to live off-campus, and regularizes the college's revenue stream.

In effecting a four-year residency requirement for students entering in 2010, and to achieve the optimal balance, we will need to build housing for an additional 150 students by 2012-2013, as outlined in the Campus Master Plan, or implement a liberal off-campus petition policy until such housing is completed. We must also maintain or renovate our existing facilities to ensure an optimal housing experience for all of our students.

Academic Success & Critical Thinking

Our knowledge and practice is rooted in research showing that living on campus is one factor contributing to gains in critical thinking (Gellin, 2003) and that first year students living on campus have higher GPAs than students living off campus (Nicpon et. al, 2007). At CSB, 81% of our students agreed or strongly agreed that living on campus encouraged them to be academically successful as measured in a Student Voice Survey conducted in Spring 2006. Similarly, almost 79% of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that living on campus helped them to utilize and participate in academic and other services on campus.

Social Interactions & Satisfaction

Living on campus is also significantly related to student satisfaction among college women (Bean & Vesper, 1994). Additional studies show that living on campus enhances students' social interactions by providing them with opportunities to develop friendships (Christie & Dinham, 1990). In the same Student Voice Survey mentioned above nearly 84% of the CSB students surveyed reported that living on campus led to opportunities to interact and meet other students. Residence hall programming has an important role in the residential experience. We learned from the same survey that 70% of the respondents reported that they had attended a residence hall program and almost 78% agreed or strongly agreed that residence hall programs aided in their adjustment to the campus community. Similarly, nearly 78% of the CSB students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that residence hall programs gave them an opportunity to interact with other students.

Our experience also tells us that a significant proportion of objectionable behavior occurs in off-campus housing. Despite the efforts of the CSB and SJU Deans of Student, we face consistent challenges with activity related to drunkenness, disorderly conduct, destruction of property, and disturbing the peace associated with off-campus housing. The community norms we have established at CSB and SJU are more readily apparent on a day-to-day basis for our students living on campus, and when those norms are violated on campus we have more strategies at our disposal for educating students.

Diversity

The College of Saint Benedict has made a strong commitment to increasing the intercultural competency of our students, faculty and staff and seeks to enroll a student body that is diverse in terms of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Department of Residential Life is a key participant in this process. Optimal residential experiences promote and engage students in their understanding of cultural identity and their appreciation of human difference. Living on campus is significantly related to students' higher levels of openness to diversity, and positive and inclusive attitudes towards diversity (Pike, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Over 40% of CSB respondents reported in the Student Voice Survey that living on campus increased their understanding of racial and ethnic diversity and over 50% reported that living on campus increased their understanding of gender issues. Living on campus also led to over 50% of the students surveyed reporting that they interacted with people from cultures different than their own and over 65% reported interacting with people whose faiths were different from their own.

Intentional Four Year Residential Experience

In a variety of different ways, we plan very intentionally for the CSB residential experience. This is evident in terms of the programming done for each cohort and the articulation of cohort specific experiences. We seek partnerships with a number of campus departments within student development and academic affairs to connect students with programs, resources and services that are appropriate for each cohort group. Our staffing model and training program are set up to prepare staff members for the residence area in which they will work. There are different goals and priorities for each residential area based on the cohort group needs. Lastly, as we have built new buildings and renovate existing facilities, decisions about the physical space in which students live are based on a cohort model. We design and utilize both living space and community space differently in each residential area. The "4 Year Residential Life Experience" document provides greater detail regarding the intentionality of the CSB residential experience.

Four Year Residency Implementation Timeline

2012 - 2013	New Campus Housing Opens in August 2012 (150 beds)
2010 - 2011	First year of four year residency requirement

Four Year Residency and Impact on Off-Campus Housing Options for Students

Given current enrollment and expected future enrollment we are not planning to provide housing for 100% of our students. As such, there will be students who will live off-campus. When the four-year residency requirement is fully implemented there will be a process for students to apply for the option to live off-campus.

Conclusion

There is clear evidence that indicates a wide range of learning happens as a result of living on-campus. A four-year residency requirement provides us with the opportunity to support and enhance a student's learning and personal growth with intentionality and purpose from her first year through her senior year. A four-year residency requirement at a residential liberal arts institution is about more than "beds and pillows". It requires a commitment to the overall student experience inside and outside the classroom as well an integration of the curricular and co-curricular experience that is the result of authentic and on-going partnerships between student development and academic affairs.

Website for CSB Four Year Residency Information:
http://www.csbsju.edu/csbreslife/FourYearResidentialExperience.htm

Website for SJU Four Year Residency Information:
http://www.csbsju.edu/sjureslife/4yearrequirement.htm

Appendix 1

Peers	Peers continued
Agnes Scott	Washington and Jeff
Albion College	Westmont College
Allegheny	Wheaton College, IL
Augustana	Willamette University
Austin College	
Beloit College	**Aspirants**
Bennington College	
Birmingham Southern	Bard College
Coe College	Centre College
College of Wooster	College of the Holy Cross
Drew University	Connecticut College
Earlham College	Denison University
Goucher College	DePauw University
Gustavus Adophus	Dickinson College
Hampden-Sydney	Franklin and Marshall College
Hampshire College	Furman University
Hanover College	Gettysburg College
Hendrix College	Kalamazoo College
Hobart/William Smith	Kenyon College
Hollins College	Lafayette College
Hope College	Lawrence University
Illinois Wesleyan	Occidental College
Juniata College	Pitzer College
Knox College	Reed College
Lake Forest College	Rhodes College
Lewis and Clark	Sarah Lawrence College
Luther College	Sewanee—University of the South
Mills College	Skidmore College
Millsaps College	Southwestern University
Muhlenberg College	St. Lawrence University
Ohio Wesleyan	St. Olaf College
Principia College	Trinity College
Randolph College	Union College
Randolph-Macon	University of Richmond
Spelman College	Wabash College
Susquehanna Univ	Wheaton College
Sweet Briar	Whitman College
Thomas Aquinas	Wofford College
Transylvania Univ	
U of Puget Sound	
Ursinus College	