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## NCCC's new student housing wins praise

by Susan Mikula Campbell  
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*Bassam Deeb, NCCC vice president of student services, and Student Trustee Settimia Tripi sit near the window in the living area of one of the model suites, which overlooks the future courtyard. (photo courtesy of NCCC)*

"This ain't bad!"

"And it's brand new!"

"All this is included?"

"This IS nice!"

A busload of exuberant students from Seneca Comprehensive High School this week toured and immediately made themselves comfortable in Niagara County Community College's latest addition – the Village College Suites at NCCC.

College officials and developers are careful to call the new 308-bed facility "student housing," not a dormitory, because of the apartment-like living provided.

Most of the furnished suites, done in neutral beige with green and blue accents, contain four private bedrooms with a common living dining area. A few two-bedroom suites and some two-bed double economy suites (two students to a bedroom) also are available.

Each pair of private bedrooms shares a bathroom. Sinks are set apart in a separate alcove next to the door of the area

containing the toilet and shower, so more than one person can get ready for class at the same time.

The common area contains a couch, table, chairs and a kitchen area complete with stove, microwave, refrigerator, dishwasher, sink and cupboards.

Utilities are included; each suite has its own heating and air conditioning controls. Wi-Fi and cable also are included. The building has its own fitness center and common area lounge and café. Students will be able to purchase a few groceries right on site, such as college basics – milk, cereal and Ramen noodles. There's 24-hour emergency maintenance and 24-hour carded building access. Each suite and each room have their own keys.

As a student trustee, Settimia Tripi, 20, has seen the Village College Suites "go from dirt to an actual building." The North Buffalo resident is hoping to be a resident advisor at the facility this fall, not only to avoid the winter drive and high gas prices, but because of the amenities offered.

"The rooms are very, very nice; very spacious," she said. "It really doesn't look like a dorm; it looks like your own apartment."

She likes the in-suite intercom, so if a friend drops by or a pizza is ordered, a push of a button can let someone in the building. The in-building workout room helps prevent gaining "the freshman 15." Plus, with the college buildings just a few steps away, residents will have more time to take advantage of all the extra activities NCCC has to offer, from theater to sports, she said.

Bassam Deeb, NCCC vice president for student services, said studies have shown that student housing factors into one's choice of colleges. Having housing also means the college can better recruit students from outside the county to offset any decline in population. It also solidifies the image of the college as an institution of higher education, not a stepping stone between high school and college.

The new building already has generated a lot of positive comment on campus, he said. "I knew all along it was going to look spectacular."

NCCC also will be able to use the apartments in the summer for things like summer camps, athletic camps, academic camps and even Elderhostel groups, he said.

Construction is still under way at the \$19.5 million facility scheduled to open for the fall semester, but model suites are now open so interested students and parents can take a look. Just follow the yellow signs at the back of the campus.

Not only will there be open houses from 2 to 4 p.m. June 7 and 14 with Kiss 98.5 FM, but the models will be open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays through Fridays when property manager Dennis Viera is on site, and appointments can be made for Saturdays and evening hours.

Theeranee Schmidt is marketing product manager for student housing with United Realty Management Group of Troy, which is managing the project for the college. She said current applications and deposits have made the Village College Suites about one-third full already. "It sells itself," Schmidt said.

The majority of students are from New York, with some from Niagara County and a good number from Erie County, she said. There are even two nursing students planning to drive cross-country from California.

This is her group's second student housing project. The first, the 354-bed Finger Lakes College Suites in Canandaigua opened at full capacity last fall with more than 50 students on the waiting list. More than 200 students are on the waiting list for the fall of 2008.



*The common living area has a couch, table, chairs and a kitchen area with stove, microwave, refrigerator and dishwasher. (photo courtesy of NCCC)*

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