Design fosters togetherness at KU's newly opened Oswald and Self halls

$48.6 million dorms are completely full for fall semester

August 19, 2015

Kansas University’s newest residence halls aim to bring students together — between floors, between adjoining halls and even between other halls on Daisy Hill.

The just-opened Oswald and Self halls are connected by the two-story Daisy Hill Commons, open to all residents on the hill.

“This was intentionally designed for first-year students,” KU Student Housing director Diana Robertson said, “for their academic success, for their community development, for their engagement in campus life.”

Except for some finishing touches and landscaping, the $48.6 million bond-funded Oswald/Self construction project is complete. The big move-in day is Thursday, though resident assistants and some select students already are at home there this week.

The two halls — Oswald on the south and Self on the north, both named for KU benefactors — are mirror images and house 350 students each, Robertson said. She said both halls are completely full.

Here’s what the Journal-World saw on a tour of the new dorms on Tuesday.

The rooms

Each hall has five floors with two wings apiece, one for women and one for men. There’s a laundry room on every floor of each dorm, and high ceilings, interior balconies and open lounge areas.

There are three room layouts — each considerably more spacious than dorm rooms and even suites of old, and each with its own bathroom. Instead of one-over-the-other bunk beds, all students get their own bunk bed with loft space underneath for a couch, desk or whatever they’d like to put there.

Layout options are a four-person suite with a living room (60 rooms, holding 240 people), a two-person with a shared bedroom (180 rooms, 360 people) and a two-person with private rooms for each resident (40 rooms, 80 people) — a new layout not offered in any other KU residence halls. Robertson said market analysis indicated a desire among some students for private rooms.

Only the four-person suite has a living room, forcing students in the two-person rooms out into the commons to mingle.

At $7,100 per year or $9,230 per year for a private-room suite, Oswald and Self are now the most expensive residence halls on campus, Robertson said.

The commons, first floor
In addition to almost entirely glass walls overlooking either side of Daisy Hill, the commons has a large living room, digital piano, recreation room with ping-pong and pool tables, and a full kitchen for students to use.

There’s also a full-size display dorm room for prospective students to tour and a touch-screen television display for them to scroll through photos and layouts of rooms in other KU dorms.

**The commons, second floor**

The second floor of the commons is what KU calls the academic service center.

There’s a full-size classroom where, among other things, University 101 classes will be held, and five conference rooms, each named for a prestigious scholarship available to KU students.

The KU IT service desk moved from Burge Union to the commons. The KU Association of University Residence Halls office is there, too.

**Outside**

Grass, patios and sitting-walls have replaced the road that once ran in front of Lewis — home to Mrs. E’s, the Daisy Hill cafeteria — and Hashinger halls.

The road now runs on the west side of Daisy Hill, with a sidewalk to access it running right under the new building.

KU senior Aaron Gunkel, a resident assistant on the fourth floor of Oswald, said without having to trek across parking lots and roads as before, students might be more likely to move between the new and old residence halls.

“I think we’re going to see a lot more interaction,” he said. “This is going to bring all the halls together.”

---