

College towns: new hot spots for retirement

By Diane C. Lade
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - Retirees who considered their college years among the best in their lives now have a chance to relive them, right on or near campus. College towns are considered the new hot spots for retirement communities. The chance to audit college classes tuition-free and innovative performing-arts programs are drawing seniors to academic enclaves just as golf courses and the beach once lured retirees to coastal Florida.

"If the choice is Leisure World or a college town, more retirees are starting to opt for the latter," said David Savageau, author of "Retirement Places Rated.. In fact, a Rocky Mountain-area college town will be Savageau's No. 1 pick when the latest edition of his book comes out in May, although he won't say which one.

Numerous centers of higher learning already have retirement complexes either on or directly adjoining their campuses and more are actively considering it. The University of Florida, pestered for years by graying Gators who can't get enough of Gainesville, has taken an option on 100 wooded acres immediately south of the main campus. The school has yet to find a contractor for the yet unnamed

retirement complex, and the \$125 million needed to build it must be culled entirely from private sources. But the administration considers the project a sure thing and plans to start taking deposits next fall.

"We think the Gators will line up, and we'll be sold out instantly," said Leslie Bram, an associate vice president with the University of Florida Foundation, the university's private, nonprofit fund-raising arm overseeing the proposal. "Gainesville is a great place to live. We have a world class medical school, and sports enthusiasts will love it."

Boosters of this lifestyle say active seniors will thrive in an environment where they have easy access to college-level classes, can teach part-time or as volunteers, or just mingle with young students.

"People need a reason to get up in the morning and in our society now, that's the big problem with retirement," said Leon A. Pastalan, a University of Michigan architecture professor who has studied college-based senior communities and helped develop one at his school. "An environment where learning never stops is bound to be attractive."

Being closer to her children was the main reason Jeanette Ehrman, 82, signed up for an apartment in the yet-to-be constructed Lasell Village, located on the grounds of tiny Lasell College in Newton, Mass. But the

widowed retired teacher from Pompano Beach, Fla. also was intrigued that Lasell encourages its residents to draft a "learning plan", a combination of classwork and volunteerism, and even has a dean on site to help.

"I would like to work with needy children who have learning problems," said Ehrman, who years ago taught deaf youngsters. "And take some classes, of course, but not necessarily in education."

How universities gain from retirement ventures is less obvious, as typically the schools neither finance the enterprises nor receive revenue from them. The complexes usually are built by private developers, sometimes on university land leased to them at minimal cost, then managed by private companies.

Some have suggested, however, that colleges hope alumni living next door will be more likely to remember their alma maters in their wills. Another benefit is that students, especially in health care, can do field work in the retirement center.

"But as hokey as it sounds, we also feel having more older, experienced folks will just enrich the community," said Bram, of the University of Florida Foundation. "They can speak to our classes or teach."

Pastalan, who wrote University-Linked Retirement Communities believes there are about 75 to 100 such

senior complexes either on or near college campuses. Most were built within the past decade. Pastalan predicts they will become even more popular as the Baby Boomers start thinking about retirement (they begin turning 65 in 2011).

Unlike their silver-haired predecessors who flocked to South Florida in record numbers during the 1970s and '80s, Boomers won't be interested in condos or lifestyles of nonstop leisure, Pastalan said. College towns tend to be small and uncongested, loaded with rental housing, and have a higher level of human services like hospitals than typical small cities, said Places Rated's Savageau. He also found most were affordable, thanks to their large cash-strapped student population.

While entertainment and staples may be inexpensive, seniors should be prepared to pay a premium housing price for an educational retirement. A typical setup is a \$100,000 to \$300,000 upfront payment, which is refunded when the resident dies or moves, coupled with monthly rental fees between \$2,000 and \$4,000.

"Clearly, this is now not an option for people with modest incomes," Pastalan said. If the concept becomes popular, he envisions more affordable models springing up near community colleges. Typically, it's been the colleges, not the developers, that have started the ball rolling. Many, like the

University of Florida, were prodded by former students eager to relive their youth on location.

Others, like Lasell College, a 600-student women's school 15 miles outside of Boston that only recently went co-ed, were looking for creative ways to expand. The college set aside 13 acres on campus and signed up CareMatrix, a corporation better known for its assisted living facilities, to create the 162-unit Lasell Village.

The village, where Jeanette Ehrman will live, is scheduled to open in early 2000 and has an adjoining nursing home. Already, about 70 percent of the rental apartments have been reserved. About 60 percent of the applicants are single, with the average age in the low 70s.

The village may be the first retirement community to have a fulltime professional "dean," Paula Panchuck, who will work with residents on study programs that can incorporate volunteer work, part-time teaching, and classes at Lasell or political activism.

The learning plan "is not a requirement, but I think it's the single most attractive thing about this community," said Panchuck, who has a doctorate in adult development and aging.

Lasell representatives were in West Palm Beach, Fla. earlier this month to recruit potential new residents, as many northern college-based

communities have had inquiries from disenchanting Sun Belt retirees. Some are tired of 12 months of summer. Others, however, want to be closer to their families, as they grow older.

At the Colonades, a seniors' community in Charlottesville, Va. adjoining the University of Virginia and built by Marriott's senior living division, the majority of the roughly 300 residents are on their second retirement move. And quite a few are from Florida.

About 70 percent are somehow connected with the university either personally or through their families, said General Manager Mark Kastan. But he figures one of the Colonades strongest selling points is that it's only about an hour from Washington D.C., where many of the residents' adult children live.

While college towns are attracting the retirement housing industry's attention right now, Kastan doesn't believe the trend will be huge because many of those small cities are too isolated. Employment opportunities there for adult children or seniors who still need to work are limited.

Marriott, which has developed two university-based facilities, does not have any immediate plans for more. "The marketplace is difficult and you need to choose your location carefully," Kastan said.

Colleges joining sweatshop watchdog alliance but students still skeptical

By Christine Tatum
College Press Exchange

CHICAGO (CPX) - Some of the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities have joined a group set up to ensure their names aren't on apparel and goods made in sweatshops, but many student activists are angered by the alliance because they say the group's policies are weak.

Seventeen schools, including Brown, Duke, Harvard and Princeton universities, this week joined the Fair Labor Association, a new group to be made up of affiliates among consumer, labor and human rights groups; corporations; educational institutions and religious organizations. The announcement came two weeks after hundreds of protesters across the nation, many of whom were students, demonstrated against corporate giants for allegedly subjecting workers overseas to abusive working conditions and unfair wages.

Other schools that have agreed to participate are: Dartmouth, Smith and

Wellesley colleges; Columbia, Cornell, Florida State, Rutgers, Tufts and Yale universities; Marymount University in Virginia; and the universities of Arizona, Notre Dame and Pennsylvania.

The American Council on Education released a statement saying that the association will be charged with establishing "a carefully prescribed monitoring process to assess the compliance of companies" that have licenses to produce products bearing colleges' names.

Yet many students, like dozens at the University of Michigan who protested with a sit-in at the president's office on Wednesday and Thursday, are demanding that their schools not participate in the association. So far, students say, the association's policies don't go far enough in addressing two of their biggest concerns: fair wages for workers and public disclosure of factory locations.

Even association supporters say those are legitimate issues to raise, but ones that won't be resolved overnight. "You have to make a

choice," said Robert Durkee, vice-president for public affairs at Princeton and a member of an A.C.E. committee that studied ways for colleges to embrace codes of ethics governing the sale of licensed goods. "You can either be a part of a process that wants to start somewhere, to bring everyone in to work collaboratively, or you can choose to participate in a process that is confrontational."

Durkee is also quick to note that membership in the association does not prohibit schools from establishing their own strict rules. Some schools, including Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Harvard and Princeton, already are requiring companies to disclose the locations of factories where licensed apparel is made, which goes beyond the association's code. The F.L.A. requires only that its board members know of factory locations. It also allows for companies to receive advance notice of inspections and has stated that all official monitoring reports will be kept internal. Even worse, many critics say, is that the decision of when and where to inspect

rests with the association's executive director, not with the university that suspects its code of ethics is being violated.

"It is simply unacceptable for universities with existing codes of conduct to endorse an excessively weak monitoring mechanism without setting forth expectations for how that mechanism will be improved to correlate with our demands for full transparency and university autonomy," said Nora Rosenberg, a student activist at Brown University. "For those schools currently without codes of conduct, endorsing these standards is not even up for consideration."

Students also fault the F.L.A.'s code because it requires companies to pay either the minimum wage or the prevailing wage, whichever is higher. They are pushing for more, insisting that current pay levels amount to little more than American pennies an hour for jobs that often demand more than 40 hours a week.

That argument has gotten the attention of the U.S. Labor Department, a supporter of the F.L.A.,

which is working to conduct a worldwide review of wages and living standards that may form the basis for eventual "living wage requirements." Association supporters, like Durkee, say they're also working to see that fair-pay standards are established.

"Again, this is a process in which colleges and universities will have a chance to make real change over time," he said. "The F.L.A. is committed to this issue as well, but it doesn't go as far and as fast as students would like." And that's not necessarily a bad thing, Durkee said.

"We're hearing from labor rights groups in a number of countries that we shouldn't get bogged down on this issue because if we can get companies to pay at the minimum wage, that would be a real improvement," he continued. "But at the same time, we have to be careful not to set the standard so high that companies decide to move their factories to other locations."

Yet another sticking point with many students is the board of directors that will be overseeing the

association. Six seats will be reserved for corporate representatives, six for non-government organizations, one seat set aside for colleges and universities and one for a chairperson approved by all of the other board members. Nike Inc. already has managed to snag a spot on the board.

"It's all pretty inadequate because it's like letting the fox guard the chicken coop," said Rachel Miller, a student at Holy Cross College. "If a company needed to be monitored or decertified from its 'non-sweatshop status' what are the chances of getting the votes needed to do that?"

That companies are willing to sit across the table to discuss labor issues with groups that don't always share their interests is a victory that shouldn't be easily dismissed, Durkee said. "Businesses are at this point willing to say that there are some things they need to work on, and they're willing to invite us in on the process," he said. "That's not such a bad place to start."

UNC president advocates new, hands-on admissions standards

By Jennifer Rothacker
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

RALEIGH, N.C. - University of North Carolina system President Molly Broad says it's time to raise admission standards, not through higher test scores, but with hands-on evidence. Rather than requiring better grades or SAT scores, Broad wants University of North Carolina applicants to submit work such as high school essays or science projects to show they know how to think and are ready to do college-level work.

"I do believe we are at the point we need to take another look at requirements to get into the university," Broad told N.C. legislators Thursday. It was Broad's first public unveiling of the suggestion. She and her staff are applying for at least \$1 million in grant money to study the idea further and are planning a May trip to Oregon, where such performance-based standards are now used.

Broad argues that standardized test scores and grades don't tell the full story of a prospective college student. She wants proof of deeper knowledge. "We realize there are increasingly high expectations: some of that includes learning how to learn," Broad told the legislators. "We must develop students who learn how to learn."

Currently, applicants to any of the system's 16 universities must have taken a core set of high school classes, including foreign languages and higher level maths. Their application must also provide a grade point

average and SAT score.

In the late 1980s, the Board of Governors phased in tougher standards over three years. Now, Broad said, it's appropriate to raise the standards again. While she doesn't suggest doing away with the traditional measures, SAT scores, GPAs, class rank, she said portfolios of high school work could identify the most sophisticated applicants.

"It's interesting we know the dates of when William Shakespeare was born and died," said Charles Coble, vice president of University-School Programs for the UNC System. "But what's more interesting and meaningful is do you comprehend the complexities of 'MacBeth' and appreciate the ironies of 'Romeo and Juliet'?"

In Oregon, secondary school students take tests that ask questions beyond regurgitation of facts and formulas. They are also required to put together portfolios that show samples of their writing, communication and math skills.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if we knew our young people could write before they came to college?" asked Sam Houston, executive director of the UNC Center for School Leadership Development.

Broad and her staff are far from releasing any details of what potential portfolios would look like here. In general, college admission counselors would review the portfolios for "clarity of thought, coherency, conveying of meaning," Coble said.

Such standards could resolve

several admission dilemmas, Coble said. Students who don't do well on standardized tests would have another opportunity to shine. Admission counselors could do a better and fairer job comparing students by seeing some of the substance behind the grades.

By demanding more from applicants, he said, fewer new students would need remediation, courses that prepare students for college-level work. Last fall, about 5,000 students across the UNC system were enrolled in remediation classes.

And the universities could better ensure employers they're getting qualified workers. "Out in the world, those who employ our graduates need to know what students are able to do," Coble said.

To work, the portfolio idea would need the state's public school system to help students put portfolios together. State Superintendent Mike Ward said the Department of Public Instruction supports the idea. "If you look at what's currently proposed for 2003 high school graduation standards, it's completion of portfolios," Ward said. The State Board of Education will vote on those standards next month.

Ben Ruffin, chairman of the Board of Governors, said he'd stand behind anything that would help students. "I think students want to do more," Ruffin said. "They understand that for them to be competitive and to get the kind of ride they want to get, the house they want to get, the rags they want to get, they have to be equipped."

Student candidates play key role in N.Y. elections

College Press Exchange

VALATIE, N.Y. (CPX) - A couple of New York college students felt the joy of victory and the agony of defeat after this week's elections. Voters in Valatie, N.Y., a town of about 1,500 people living 16 miles south of Albany, elected 19-year-old Jason Nastke, a student of finance at Hudson Valley Community College, to the office of mayor.

Nastke, who was already serving as a village trustee, got 290 votes in the election, beating out 65-year-old

incumbent Charles White, who received 182 votes.

But voters in New Paltz, N.Y., decided to stick with the age and experience offered by incumbent mayor Thomas Nyquist instead of electing SUNY-New Paltz senior Russell Ferdico to the village's top position.

Nyquist won what Village Clerk Julie Boice said was the biggest election in New Paltz's history. He received 497 of the 891 votes cast, while Ferdico received 345. The rest went to write-in candidates.

Students sue Kentucky State over yearbook, newspaper

College Press Exchange

CINCINNATI (CPX) - A federal appeals court is considering a claim by former Kentucky State students who say the university's administration censored student publications when it refused to distribute a student yearbook and interfered with the student newspaper.

Attorneys for the students opened the hearings on March 18 by asking the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals to reverse a lower court's November 1997 ruling in favor of the university. In that decision, U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Hood rejected claims that the university had violated students' First Amendment rights.

Hood ruled that the yearbook was a nonpublic forum unprotected by the First Amendment because its content

did not amount to public speech. He also ruled that the students' claims concerning the campus newspaper were unfounded.

Former students Charles Kinkaid and Capril Coffer filed the lawsuit. Both accuse the administration of trying to keep "negative news" out of The Thorobred News and of forbidding distribution of the 1992-94 yearbook. Kinkaid has argued that he paid an \$80 student fee that entitled him to a copy of the yearbook. Coffer, who worked on the student newspaper, was the yearbook's editor.

University officials said they confiscated the yearbook because of its poor quality. Among their complaints were the color of the book's cover and pictures that were intentionally mislabeled or not labeled at all. Attorneys for the

students argue that future school officials might use such excuses to stop campus publications containing content the officials dislike.

Students also fault school officials for failing to consult with a student publications board before confiscating the yearbooks. They also maintain the university transferred the coordinator of student publications out of her job, against her will, after she said the students had a right to determine the contents of the university's yearbook and newspaper.

The students are supported by the Society of Professional Journalists, American Society of Newspaper Editors, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the National Federation of Press Women.