The Thompson
Opens to First Creative Warrior Residents

Beginning in the fall of 2017, The Thompson has reopened – this time as the University’s newest residence hall and the only hall reserved exclusively for undergraduate students in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts.

In 1874, Mrs. David Thompson donated $10,000 for its construction to provide a home for aged women. George Mason, one of the best-known architects of the period, designed the building. Originally known as “The Thompson Home for Old Ladies,” The Thompson Home first opened on October 22, 1884. Wayne State acquired the building in 1978 and it served as the home for the School of Social Work for nearly 30 years.

Not your average residence hall

The historic Thompson Home renovation is part of the University’s “Arts on Cass” vision. Plans to refurbish the building began in 2016 with the fine, performing and communication arts in mind.

“This new residence hall will provide a unique student experience in this convenient Cass Avenue location, steps away from the Gretchen Valade Jazz Center, the costume and scene shops, and classes, studios, editing suites and rehearsal spaces in Old Main,” explained Lezlie Hart, associate director of student services for the College. “To mark the building’s fabulous transformation, the College refers to the building as The Thompson.”

Three features make The Thompson unique among residence halls on the campus. First, in refurbishing The Thompson, the University has melded the historic character of the building with a contemporary look. This new look is based on student feedback about color palettes and finishes, furniture design and even the kitchenette layout. Second, The Thompson is equipped with specialized spaces. Students may produce creative work in the video editing studio, the community room with sprung floor, the collaboratorium with its glass writing wall or a soundproof practice booth. A third unique feature is the programming that faculty and staff are currently planning around the theme of entrepreneurship. Interested students will be offered numerous resources and personalized faculty expertise.

“The Thompson has been designed with the perfect blend of facilities and programming to turn CFPCA ‘dreamers’ into ‘doers,’” explains Associate Professor Elizabeth Barton. “Think of the possibilities creative students are afforded by living together with supportive facilities and programming designed intentionally to assist in bringing their entrepreneurial visions to reality.”

One CFPCA student received a behind-the-scenes look at The Thompson in the midst of construction. Victoria Oldfield, who recently graduated with a major in Interior Design, was an intern on the project’s renovation construction team.

“This is such an awesome opportunity for CFPCA students,” explains Oldfield. “Who wouldn’t want to be part of history and have a chance to claim being one of the first to be part of Arts on Cass at Wayne State?”

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