

Faculty Senate Resolution on the New Raguet Apartments — 3/30/2006

The University has announced plans to demolish the New Raguet apartments this summer and to turn their space into temporary parking, which would displace students with families and international graduate students. The Faculty Senate calls upon the Board of Regents to delay the demolition of New Raguet for at least a year in order to study the effect its loss would have on the nontraditional and international graduate student populations. Be it resolved that the Senate requests that New Raguet continue to be maintained as low-cost housing during the 2006-2007 academic year.

New Raguet is the least expensive housing available to students with families and graduate students. A two-bedroom unit there costs only \$466.00 per month, which includes all utilities. The only other two-bedroom apartment units on campus are University Woods, which rent for \$618.00 per month and require residents to pay the cost of the electricity bill. Aside from New Raguet and University Woods, there is only one other apartment complex on campus, which is the Garner apartments. Garner offers only one-bedroom apartments, which cost \$479.00 per month (including all utilities). There is also the question of whether there will even be available units in Garner, which is already at or near capacity for next year. According to Ms. Nancy Fox, who adjuncts in the English Department and owns rental apartments in Nacogdoches, the going rate for a two-bedroom apartment off campus is about \$550.00, excluding utilities. With utilities, the resident would pay closer to \$700.00 per month. Living off-campus entails the additional expense of transportation to campus. Moreover, residents who live on campus have access to Walmart every Friday afternoon via a free University-provided bus service. Several students living at New Raguet rely heavily on this weekly bus service in order to get groceries and other necessities, as they do not have their own vehicles.

New Raguet has been a popular residence for international graduate students, who must maintain strict budgets because they are prohibited by immigration laws from working and do not qualify for government loans and other financial assistance typically available to residents. The graduate assistantship stipend is currently set at \$8,100.00 for the academic year for most recipients. A graduate student living with a roommate in New Raguet would incur the following expenses for the 2005-2006 academic year:

Tuition and fees	3,507.00 for Fall and Spring *
Room	2,796.00 per student **
Meal Plan	2,318.00 for Fall and Spring ***
Books	<u>500.00 for Fall and Spring ****</u>
	9,121.00 *****

*This amount would increase if the student attends one or more Summer sessions.

**This is half the annual rent for an apartment unit at New Raguet. International graduate students typically live 2-3 to an apartment there.

***This is the cheapest available meal plan. Students not opting for the meal plan would still incur a significant expense for providing their own food, as well as other necessities.

****This is a conservative estimate.

*****In addition to the expenses listed above, international graduate students must pay for airfare for trips to and from home.

As the above budget indicates, the assistantship stipend is not adequate to cover all of the costs of graduate student life even for those students living at New Raguet. While the administration has recognized the need to boost the assistantship stipend, higher housing costs would negate much if not all of such an increase. That a higher stipend is not a panacea for increased housing costs is also evident when we consider that not all graduate students are fortunate enough to have an assistantship.

It should be noted that the international graduate student population has steadily increased over the past decade, and it is one of the stated goals of President Guerrero to continue to increase the international student population on campus. SFA's international students have made the University a richer and more diverse community. A stronger international presence will result in a stronger graduate program, resulting in turn in a stronger external grant program. Tearing down New Raguet would have a detrimental effect on the recruitment of international graduate students, as pointed out by Dr. David Jeffrey, Associate Vice President of Graduate Studies, in an article published by *The Daily Sentinel* on the pending demolition of New Raguet ("SFA Plans to Demolish Family Housing," by Kathryn Birdwell, 3/2/06, p. 1A). Should the demolition go through, it would be especially bad timing since SFA has just committed major resources to expanded recruitment of international students by hiring Dr. Daniel Norton, the new Director of International Studies and Programs. Does it make sense to spend resources to recruit international students while tearing down their housing?

Enrollment of students with families has likewise increased, as noted in *The Daily Sentinel* article. Many students with families were displaced when the Starr Apartments were demolished last year to make way for the new tennis courts. Tearing down New Raguet would risk sending the message that SFA is noncommittal towards nontraditional students. At a time when boosting enrollment is crucial, the University cannot afford to alienate any segment of its student population.

According to Mr. John Rulfs, Director of the physical plant, the parking spaces that will replace New Raguet if the demolition goes through will only be "place keepers." In other words, no long-term use for the space occupied by New Raguet has been designated by the administration. As such, the Faculty Senate questions the prudence of tearing down apartments that are vital to maintaining the University's populations of international graduate students and students with families when there is no immediate need to do so.

The Faculty Senate is aware that New Raguet is an aging apartment complex that requires maintenance, especially to the roof. However, the Senate believes that not enough consideration has been given to the loss of prestige, diversity, and goodwill that could occur if international graduate students and students with families are driven away from the University due to mounting housing costs. Since the Senate has recently been engaged by 3D/I to participate in the University's long range plan for facility and space needs, we would appreciate the opportunity to study the low-cost housing issue more thoroughly before New Raguet is demolished. In the meantime, we respectfully request that New Raguet be maintained throughout the 2006-2007 academic year.