Architects confer with students on plans for new college

By RICK HERR

The architects for the new men's college now being planned heard proposals Monday that the college should contain vast common facilities, including seminar rooms for classes, a roof penthouse for the master, a theater, an amphitheater, and devious hallways.

The meeting was held at the West Alabama offices of architects Wilson, Crane, Morris, and Anderson. The participants were two fifth year architects, Dave Richardson and Paul Farmer; two college presidents, Carolyn Porter and Rick Herr; and the senior partner of the firm, Talbott Wilson.

The plans for the college are still in a very nebulous stage and along with the advice of members of the faculty, administration, board and masters, Wilson wished to have a sample of student opinion about what the new building should be.

'College' Part

Richardson asserted that the present men's college buildings fail to serve the purpose for which they were designed because they lack a central focus, a feeling that there is a definite spot where one could say, "Now I'm in the college."

He said that not only was it easy to consider the present facilities simply living quarters connected to a dining hall, but that it was difficult not to do so. Wilson could understand the problem, and he asked what the students thought could be done about it. Farmer responded that there were several things that could be done. The student should be forced to go through the "college" part of the building to get to his room. This "college" part should not only include the lounge and the proposed library, but the study room, game room, tv room, music room, and others that the present colleges have found to be an essential part of themselves.

The importance of defining an entrance, a definition that neither Will Rice nor Hanszen now have, was mentioned, with the hope that the new one will not be so lacking.

Sooner or later all such meetings get down to the real nitpicky part, and take on the well-worn task of telling what a college should be. Herr pointedly stated that he thought a college should be an important educational branch of the university, and that the building should be designed to further this end.

Perhaps more faculty living quarters should be planned for, and offices in the college might be a good idea. But even more important, the group stressed the need for spaces which could be used for informal seminar classes, student discussions, and small special-interest lectures.

Singles

But the need for private and semi-private spaces was emphasized strongly. Richardson claimed that the two-man bedrooms opening onto the living-study room of the new dorms were absolutely unworkable.

All four students agreed that the new building should have a higher percentage of singles than any of the present college dormitories—perhaps all singles, in groups of three or four off larger rooms designed explicitly for socializing.

Wilson questioned the validity of providing rooms for "nothing but socializing" in an educational building, but the students emphatically let him know that this is a worthwhile, even essential part of a Rice college education.

Another essential part of a college is the sense of community and fellowship, which the students felt is lacking in the present colleges. This sense can best be brought about by forcing the college members to mingle in a common area, such as any of the "college" rooms mentioned.

Interior halls are important for this reason, Miss Porter, Farmer, and Herr felt, but the halls should not open into either bedrooms or study rooms. The male students, speaking from experience, cautioned against long straight halls, as they often degenerate into bowling alleys.

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frisbee courts, etc. Wilson said that they would make the halls "devious" to avoid this problem and Farmer suggested that a vertical hallway might work as well.

The question of room furnishings was discussed, with Wilson beginning this phase of the meeting by asking for student opinion on the ultra-sauve, ultra-expensive Herman Miller action-dormitory furniture.

Miss Porter was against this idea, declaring that her college (Brown) was too luxurious to be conductive to study, and both Herr and Farmer felt that the money could be much better spent providing needed space, rather than filling it.

High-Rise

The meeting ended in W.C. M.&A.'s model room, where Wilson showed the four some small scale models of the proposed solutions. They include a combination of Wiess-type, exterior hallway, low-rise wing with an eight-story, ten-man-to-a-floor tower, or alternatley, a large single high-rise of about twelve stories.

The students strongly preferred the latter idea because of its centrality and its contribution to the community spirit which a college needs.

However, Wilson declared that he liked the two-building plan more, because of its attractive "massing," and the students suddenly wondered whether anything they had said would have any influence on the planning of the new men's college.