

Creighton

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OMAHA, NE — On Friday and Saturday, Aug. 11 and 12, hundreds of Creighton University students will move into Graves Hall, the Omaha campus' first residence hall built exclusively for first-year students since the 1960s and the first of any kind built since 2006.

The \$37 million building — which broke ground in the fall of 2021 — offers a new kind of living experience for Creighton freshmen.

The 400-student hall is made up mostly of four-person suites, each with two living spaces, two bedrooms and a shared bathroom. Each floor will include kitchenettes and spaces dedicated to study, socialization and recreation. The hall's lower level will provide spaces for interfaith programming, student development, wellness, academics and more. These common-area amenities will be available to students from across campus.

Graves Hall is also innovating in the area of sustainability technology. It's the first building in North America to use Virtu^{HOT HD}, a solar-powered system produced by Naked Energy and implemented by ELM Companies that will heat all water used in the residence hall and save energy costs.

The accompanying Simpson Family Courtyard, meanwhile, will serve as an active social space with a bevy of features — artificial turf (part of which can easily be converted to a volleyball court), two fire pits, multiple areas for lounge seating, a small stage for events, two ping pong tables, a bocce ball court and more.

"First-year students who live in this residence hall and use this courtyard will feel a true sense of belonging in their first home away from home," said Creighton President the Rev. Daniel S. Hendrickson, SJ, PhD.

Anticipation for Graves Hall has run high for some time, with many more incoming students wanting to live there than the space could allow. Rooms have been assigned through a lottery system.

The hall and courtyard's namesakes and lead donors are Lee C. Graves, BSBA'80, JD'83, and his wife, Judy Graves, and their close friends Kathy and Jim Simpson, BA'80. Jim and Lee first met as Creighton students and fraternity brothers.

Lee Graves is the chairman, founder and CEO of ELM Companies, which provides utility and energy management services (and implemented the Virtu^{HOT HD} system on Graves Hall's roof). Jim Simpson worked as a salesman and sales manager at IBM, then served for 20 years as the President and CEO of MSI Systems Integrators and subsequently the President of Strategic Initiatives at Sirius Computer Solutions, after the latter company acquired the former.

Throughout it all, Jim and Lee said, they have maintained the bonds they made at Creighton.

“You build these lifelong relationships that grow out of the nucleus of the people you live with on campus,” Lee Graves said. “With this new building, Creighton can give students an even greater opportunity to create the connections they’ll carry with them for the rest of their lives.”

The hope for Graves Hall and the Simpson Family Courtyard, Jim Simpson said, is that they will serve as a new arena for countless more of the kinds of moments and friendships that help students figure out who they want to be and what path they want their life to take.

“Some students come to Creighton knowing what they want to do with their life,” Simpson said. “And some are right, and some are wrong. Fortunately, Creighton creates an environment where you can pivot successfully and follow your dreams wherever they lead you. I think that’s just as true today as it was when Lee and I were students.”



Graves Hall - VIRTU HOTHD Installation