

Contact: Joan Racki

**REGISTER OF UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA  
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS**

**Action Requested:** Considering recommending to the Board approval of the following actions for the **Lawther Hall Renovation** project, a major capital project as defined by Board policy:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the University's initial submission of information to address the Board's capital project evaluation criteria (see Attachment A);
2. Accept the Board Office recommendation that the project meets the necessary criteria for Board consideration; and
3. Authorize permission to proceed with project planning, including the design professional selection process.

**Executive Summary:** The University requests permission to proceed with project planning, including the design professional selection process, for the **Lawther Hall Renovation** project, which would modernize the hall (built in 1938 and 1950) and provide semi-suites and other room configurations to meet the needs of sophomore and junior level students, while maintaining the historical integrity of the facility. The project would correct deferred maintenance and provide the building with updated mechanical systems, including air conditioning, updated life safety items, including fire alarm and fire sprinkler systems, and improved Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility to and within the building. The location of Lawther Hall is shown in Attachment B. The estimated project cost of \$21 million would be funded by residence system improvement funds and/or dormitory revenue bonds.

**Details of Project:**

**Lawther Hall Renovation**

Project Summary

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Board Action</u>
Feasibility Study (Rohrbach Assoc; Iowa City)	\$ 85,000	Dec. 2014	Not Required*
Permission to Proceed with Project Planning		Apr. 2015	Requested
Initial Review and Consideration of Capital Project Evaluation Criteria		Apr. 2015	Receive Report

\*Approved by Executive Director, consistent with Board policy

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Lawther Hall is the oldest residence hall on campus. While the exterior and interior have been routinely maintained, many of the systems (steam heat) and finishes are approaching the end of their useful lives.

The Department of Residence recently participated in a facilities benchmarking survey with the consulting firm Sightlines. The peer institutions taking part in the survey have approximately 25% of their housing in suite-style living (suites and semi-suites), while the University of Northern Iowa currently does not have any semi-suite residential opportunities. To validate the need for semi-suite rooms, a market study was completed in February of 2015. This study revealed that many students would live in the newly renovated Lawther rooms.

The anticipated project budget of \$21 million is based upon a recently completed feasibility study.

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Lawther Hall Renovation  
Evaluation Criteria

Since the project meets the Board's definition of a major capital project, the University has provided the following information in response to the Board's evaluation criteria.

Institutional Mission / Strategic Plan: This project supports UNI's mission and strategic plan by providing a safe and supportive living environment for students.

The current housing inventory of the Department of Residence is traditional residence hall rooms, which provide an excellent place for freshmen to live, and apartments for housing upperclassmen. The housing inventory does not contain semi-suites which are attractive to sophomores and juniors. To retain students through their entire academic career (on average students living on campus have a higher GPA and graduation rate), this renovation will focus on providing the semi-suite option as well as single rooms.

In addition, this renovation would offer air-conditioned space for students who remain on campus through the summer and for summer camp and conference attendees who wish to be housed on the UNI campus. The income received from these guests will keep room rates lower for students during the academic year.

Lawther Hall is the oldest residence hall on campus and has the largest amount of deferred maintenance. This renovation would reduce the Department of Residence's deferred maintenance and improve the aesthetics. This supports UNI's Value, "Sustainability – an attractive, well maintained campus environment that enhances the living and learning experience with an emphasis on environmental stewardship."

Other Alternatives Explored: The Department of Residence explored two alternatives:

One alternative involved demolishing Lawther Hall and building a new residence hall. This alternative would be done at a cost of \$25,000,000 to \$30,000,000 and would remove a historic building from campus. It was not supported.

A second alternative was considered which would have provided the updates to Lawther Hall in phases over the course of several summers. This option would take several years to complete and be more costly. The quality of craftsmanship with this type of renovation would be in question due to the short construction time frame each summer. The layout of the space would not be impacted and typical residence hall rooms would be the result. To create the desired semi-suite housing, Lawther will need to be closed for an extended time to complete the renovation. At this time the Department of Residence is able to provide ample housing for students currently housed in Lawther. As the university increases its enrollment, Lawther will be ready to house students both during the academic year and into the summer as well.

Impact on Other Facilities and Square Footage: The project will not result in the abandonment, transfer, or demolition of existing facilities.

Financial Resources for Construction Project: Funding for this project will come from the Residence System, residence hall revenue surplus funds.

Financial Resources for Operations and Maintenance: The source of funds used to support the operations and maintenance of this residential facility will be the Residence Systems revenues, which currently support Lawther Hall.

External Forces Justifying Approval: None

