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Going to College, and Living There, Too

By [MANNY FERNANDEZ](#)

The [City College of New York](#) is home to about 12,500 undergraduate and graduate students, but over the years the Harlem campus has never really been a home to any of them. Overnight sleeping was unintentional, and unadvised. The rhythm of the college, the city's quintessential commuter school, was set not by the clock, but by the subway trains.

Yesterday, however, the only commuting being done was by foot, to the elevator from the trunk of the car, and the only traffic problems came from a bottleneck of moving carts at a wrought-iron gate. Students carried boxes of computer equipment, guitar cases, pillows, bedroom mirrors and that ageless symbol of college dormitory life: a poster of the [Grateful Dead](#)'s Jerry Garcia.

The scene might have been typical at any other university. But at City College's 36-acre campus, it was an unusual sight, as students moved into the college's new \$56 million dorm building for the first time yesterday. The building, called the Towers at the City College of New York, is a beige-brick, ultramodern complex at West 130th Street and St. Nicholas Terrace. There are 164 apartments to house 600 students and faculty members.

In the afternoon, in a rain-soaked corner of campus, students and their parents steered bright-orange carts into a side entrance, and the unpacking and heavy lifting took on a kind of historical significance. The new dorm is only the second in the [City University of New York](#) system, of which City College is a part. [Hunter College](#) operates a 612-student residence hall on East 25th Street on its Brookdale campus.

Students expressed satisfaction with the particulars of their rooms, including the price, which is relatively low for many parts of Manhattan. Rents range from \$775 a month for a shared room in a two-bedroom suite to \$1,100 a month for a private studio. Several students said they chose to live on campus because they felt that they would be missing the college experience if they lived off campus. Others said they dreaded a long trip coming to and from class.

"Commuting for me is a big hassle," said Amy Edelstein, 17, a freshman from Long Island who would have had a one-hour trip each way had she not signed up for an apartment.

Eva Natal, 19, moved in yesterday to a four-bedroom suite that she will share with roommates. Ms. Natal, from Long Island, stood in line waiting to take an elevator to her third-floor room. A friend carried her electronic keyboard for her.

"I love the city, and I wanted to experience city life," said Ms. Natal, a freshman studio art major.

City College officials said they built the dorm to give students like Ms. Natal a sense of community, not an

easy task when many students often spend as much time on the subway or a commuter train as they do on campus.

Lois Cronholm, City College's senior vice president and chief operating officer, said the college had lost students over the years to other universities because it could not offer them housing on campus or near it.

"To be able to live on campus makes an enormous difference in the collegiate experience," she said.

The building is City College's second dormitory. The first, Army Hall, on Amsterdam Avenue near West 138th Street, was used in the 1940's and 1950's, including as a barracks for soldiers in World War II. The site is now a playground.

Inside the dormitory complex, the hallways hummed with movers, some hired, some not (these were often parents or siblings). Fliers and announcements were taped to the walls near the elevators ("No alcohol, no smoking, no disrespect, no problems," read one).

The dorm is open to students from City College as well as from other colleges in the area, and many of the building's new residents were rather perplexed that the news media had decided to cover their morning move-in.

In Room 11014, Nicholas Lack, 19, enjoyed his good fortune.

Mr. Lack's shared four-bedroom unit has the best view of the city in the building, a panoramic vista of the Manhattan skyline in the comfort of his living room. Mr. Lack is from Cherry Valley, N.Y., and his mother helped him get settled in the morning.

But now he was on his own, in his room, his shirts hanging neatly by the bed.

"It's exciting to take that next step along with the college," he said of the new dorm building.

By midafternoon, James Rich had helped his daughter, Serene, move into her room. He did not have far to move her belongings, as the family lives in Harlem.

Mr. Rich said that he always felt as if he missed out by not living on campus when he attended [Columbia University](#). He was happy that Serene, a freshman in the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, learned from his mistake.

"Minus this dorm, she would have gone to Vassar," he said.

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