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Annual review rates University's residence halls as second-worst

A housing official cites the age of residence halls as the primary reason for Princeton Review's critical ranking

By A. Sho Ikeda
 Senior News Reporter

The University has a reputation of being very politically active, prominent in marijuana culture, populated by hippies and offering "dungeon-like" resident halls, according to The Princeton Review's annual survey.

Every year the New York City-based company — known for its test-preparation courses, books and education services — conducts an annual survey of students at hundreds of colleges. This year, The Princeton Review surveyed 106,000 students at 351 colleges and published results in 63 different categories ranging from best professors to best campus food.

The University made appearances in four categories: No. 2 in "Dorms Like Dungeons," No. 13 in "Reefer Madness," No. 16 in "Most Politically Active," and No. 16 in "Birkenstock-Wearing, Tree-Hugging, Clove-Smoking Vegetarians."

University Housing Director Mike Eyster said the age of the University's

residence halls probably had much to do with its high ranking on the "Dorms Like Dungeons" list.

"I think the ranking is a reflection of the fact that our buildings are out of date for today's students," Eyster said. "We can't control how old the buildings are and the state that they're in without major renovation."

Eyster said the first step toward improving the residence halls' reputation is to create new housing. He pointed out the University's plan to build a new residence hall, the Living Learning Center, which would accommodate 400 first-year students.

"This is the first step the University should take to improve its housing," Eyster said.

Though the Department of Public Safety could not provide statistics on marijuana violations on campus and in residence halls, the DPS Web site listed general drug violation numbers from 1999 to 2001. Drug offenses on campus grew from 24 arrests in 1999 to 95 in 2001. According to the Web site, 78 drug-related arrests took place in on-campus residential facilities in 2001. DPS could not provide statistics on drug violations for 2002 or 2003.

After the Worker Rights Consortium protests in spring 2000, Univer-

sity students stepped into the political activism spotlight; Mother Jones Magazine ranked the University first on its list of the Top 10 Activist Campuses in America. This year, University students continued to earn the reputation of being politically active as The Princeton Review ranked the University No. 16 in the "Most Politically Active" category.

Survival Center co-Coordinator Pira Kelly said she doubted the survey's accuracy in representing the activism in colleges across the country, but added that activism at any school is important.

"There are a lot of people here who are inspired and want to improve the world," Kelly said. She said the campus anti-war group, Students for Peace, had a large membership and that animal rights, environmental, anti-racism and other movements also have a strong presence at the University.

Other significant rankings in this year's survey include Yale University boasting the best academics overall and University of Colorado at Boulder being the top party school. The school with the happiest students is Chicago's DePaul University.

Contact the city/state politics reporter at shoikeda@dailyemerald.com.

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