

For the first time in the recent past, Housing and Dining Services averaged the GPA of each residence hall floor and made the information available to all resident assistants in hopes of raising the level of academic awareness around campus.

Jody Stone, housing and dining chairperson, is the man responsible for this change. Under Stone's close attention, the Academic Initiatives and Retention Committee has set its focus on encouraging Eastern faculty and staff to interact with students on a higher level outside of the classroom.

Headed by Julie Kendall, Andrews Hall resident director, the AIR Committee is working on improving the academic success of students living on campus. They have recently introduced several programs imploring RAs to take an active role in their residents' education.

One of the AIR Committee's programs new to residence halls this semester is called the Charleston Chew. RAs in every residence hall were given dining passes that they each give to a chosen faculty member who has worked in their field and can provide insight to that RA and his or her residents. Each pass is good for a free meal at any of the dining centers and will include a Charleston Chew candy bar.

The objective is to have professors meet with their students and develop a relationship beyond the classroom, Kendall said.

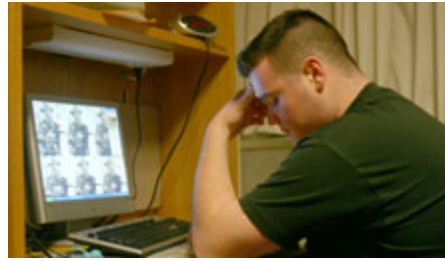
Another program for campus RAs is the Panther Success Initiative. The PSI requests that RAs meet with each of their residents to discuss their academic life and GPA.

RAs are urged to pay attention to the education of every person on their floor. Some floors around campus have chosen to provide different types of incentive to promote concern with academics, she said.

Halls give awards of candy and certificates to residents attaining a level of academic success. The AIR Committee gives out a Smarty Pants Award and an Academic Recognition Award to outstanding students.

The AIR Committee has encouraged each hall to establish its own set of rewards. Taylor Hall has promised to reward residents with candy every time an RA sees a resident studying. Other residence halls have similar methods of supporting academic excellence, Kendall said.

A floor in Andrews Hall has placed a paper "gumball machine" on a bulletin board to be filled with gumball records of every 'A' that floors residents have received on tests. Once



Media Credit: John Bailey
John Kennedy, a sophomore history major, studies in his Taylor Hall room Wednesday evening. Residence Advisors are setting up new programs on their floors to raise the collective GPAs.

the machine is filled, the students will be rewarded with a pizza party.

Professors and RAs are not the only faculty members showing their concern with student academic success. In fact, the concern reaches much a much higher level. The AIR Committee has organized a program called Panther House Calls, starting this Tuesday at 7 p.m. in Andrews and Thomas Halls.

President Lou Hencken and other Eastern officials will visit residence halls to speak with students about their classes and grades.

Kendall hopes that the interest of such prestigious faculty members will inspire residents to work more diligently this semester.

"We really think that it is important to get all of the faculty involved in student affairs. Our main focus right now is to get the RAs to concern themselves with their residents' GPA, and maintain a close relationship with the people on their floor," Kendall said.