

With ongoing frustrations about vandalism in the residence halls, students and staff have put a great deal of energy over the years into devising strategies to curb vandalism in public areas (urine in elevators, feces in stairwells, broken lights, broken ceiling tiles, etc.)

In Thomas Hall, specifically, we have tried to have several community initiative floors, made floors co-ed, added staff, created publicity campaigns, hosted forums, changed access hours, and threatened group billing. With group billing ALL members of the community are assessed the total of vandalism costs.

At its worst point, the Residential Life staff explored more frequent group billing and shutting off elevators on weekends. The students were clear in their response: Don't punish everyone for the actions of a few. Indeed, most residents had grown weary of living in the conditions created by a handful of drunks.

What students did tell us was to catch the people who were vandalizing and deal harshly with them. So we have. After stolen golf carts were driven into glass door and entrance areas on two occasions last year we decided to install video cameras in Thomas and Lightner Halls. (Prior to that, paying \$16,000 for cameras to catch people busting \$10 ceiling tiles seemed a waste.)

All students were sent e-mails from the Dean of Students last spring and again this fall warning that anyone who vandalized buildings would generally be evicted or reassigned by Residential Life for violating the Board and Residential Agreement (in addition to being referred to Conduct Board). Despite having a residency requirement, living on campus is still a privilege.

It's working, as residence hall vandalism is at an all-time low. Four students were reassigned or evicted in fall 2006 for damaging property.

Of course it is easy to threaten this but very difficult to meet a real student and evict him or her from the halls. In my conversations with these students I discuss with them that if every student who vandalized property were allowed a second chance, then that would result be untenable. I cite the will of the students and state that they have spoken: deal harshly with the people who are caught.

In a system where I espouse the importance of educational outcomes versus punitive ones, this is clearly a punitive outcome. With these incidents, the needs of the community are weighed against the needs of the individual, and currently, the community is winning.

So I ask community members to strengthen my resolve, or give me reason to reconsider: What do you think? E-mail me at [dtuttle@trinity.edu](mailto:dtuttle@trinity.edu).