

“Sick to my stomach”: Former Student Veteran’s Association President speaks on pending Veterans Lounge demolition

Kierra Koeber
Staff Writer

Former Student Veterans Association (SVA) President Mike White felt “sick to [his] stomach” upon hearing that the two-year-old Student Veterans Lounge will be demolished along with the rest of South and Southeast Morse Hall in order to align with Kansas Board of Regents’ recommendations about backlog maintenance and campus square-footage. The Emporia State plans to construct another Veteran’s Lounge in the Memorial Union before the building’s demolition in the spring of 2026.

Completed in late 2021, The Student Veterans Association lounge was a largely student-led effort.

“It wasn’t there very long at all, and for them to do away with it and kind of discard it in such a way so quickly, kind of makes me feel like, why did we go through all the effort?” White said. “I

fought four years for it when I was there and for them to do away with it so quickie just, it hurts.”

The roughly \$21,000 lounge was financed by a \$60,000 donation from the David Woods Kemper Veterans Foundation and another \$60,000 from alumni and other donors. Since its establishment, the SVA lounge has served as a safe space for student veterans to commune with each other and study with fewer stimuli, which can cause veterans anxiety elsewhere on campus.

According to Peter Hauff, Director of Facility Planning at ESU, the University is working alongside the Bloomers to construct a new Veterans Lounge below The Bulletin in the Memorial Union, news that was not dispersed to all benefactors responsible for the current lounge.

“There has been no announcement that they plan

on rebuilding,” White said. “I feel like the David Woods Kemper Foundation, the person who ran that, was upset about it and other people who donated to it are upset about it as well.”

The lounge’s relocation to the Memorial Union also surprised White, who was told there wasn’t space for it there in 2019 when the Student Veterans Association sought space on campus for the original lounge.

While White expressed relief at the lounge’s reconstruction, he hopes that the new lounge will remain true to the original intention. He thinks that the Document of Consortium should be saved and that all furniture should be salvaged. Most of all, White hopes that those involved with planning the new Veterans Lounge will listen to the ideas of current ESU student veterans and take their vision into consideration as it will be their space.

417 dorms rented out for Unbound Gravel event in June; sold out in under ten minutes

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417 Emporia State dorm rooms will be rented to approximately 600 paying guests during race week this summer for the Unbound Gravel bike racing event. Registration opened last Tuesday through the Memorial Union on Marketplace and sold out in less than ten minutes.

“I heard last year from a guest that they took off work to get signed up... they know how competitive it can be, how quickly the rooms fill up,” said Kayla Smith, Director of Residential Life Administration.

Rooms will be rented by racers, vendors, audience members, and other interested parties from Towers Complex and Schallenkamp Hall. Abigail Morse will host summer residents and will not be available for the event. The rooms will cost a flat-rate of \$315 for private and two-person rooms and \$715 for suites for the entire four nights. Guests are welcome to arrive and check out at any point.

During the week, residence halls will be fully staffed with professional staff, facilities, custodial staff, and student workers. Meals will be provided in the cafeteria

for dinner on Thursday, breakfast, lunch, and dinner on Friday, and an early breakfast on Saturday before the race. In the past, Dining Services has worked with dietitians and others to decide on menu items according to the nutritional needs of riders.

Residential Life has been renting out dorms for the event since 2013.

“It’s an event we’ve been doing for a while, but that we really enjoy doing,” Smith said. “There’s a good community amongst the guests that come, so although some of them may be competing [against each other] in the race, they’re still really supportive of each other. We really enjoy participating.”

Emporia State’s Residential Life hosts guests in dorms for other events including summer camps and conferences. This summer, dorms will also host guests for the Kansas Shrine Bowl football game. In order to rent out dorms for events such as these, and in order to operate throughout the summer, Residential Life relies on summer staff and student workers.

Applications for summer staff and summer student staff positions open in March through Handshake.



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