Welcome Remarks

Liz Cole, LSA Associate Dean for Social Sciences and Weiser Hall Faculty Project Shepherd
Dennison Bldg. to be Converted into Federal Prison

CAMPUS - On Tuesday, federal, state, and University officials held a joint press conference announcing that the Dennison Building will be converted into a prison to house detainees currently held at Guantanamo Bay. Prisoners will start arriving in the next few days, said Federal Bureau of Prisons Director Harley G. Lappin.

"Dennison is truly an ideal location for our most dangerous criminals. Remarkably, it seems as if it were built to be a prison. The windows are small, the walls are cinder-block, and the long corridors will make nightly patrol easy for our guards," said Director Lappin.

Dennison has had a long and eventful history leading up to this newest repurposing. The building was constructed during the lean years of World War II, when all capable architects were deployed overseas. University archaeologists have confirmed that it sits directly on top of an Indian burial site, and throughout the years the administration has placed its least-favorite departments and professors into the building. Campus tour leaders are instructed to pretend the building does not exist if a prospective student or parent asks, and official University policy is to claim that the building is the satellite campus of Michigan State University in Ann Arbor.

The news should come as no surprise to campus residents. In 2009, then-Provost Teresa Sullivan said that converting Dennison into a correctional facility "won't hurt the educational program. In fact, it will make it better because nobody's going to have to teach or learn in Dennison anymore. We can replace these crummy classrooms with escape-proof cells. Bureau officials told the media that the building will require few modifications before it can accept prisoners. As part of the Bureau's "Making Prisons Pleasant" program, however, Lappin said that they will be painting the walls a more soothing color and replacing the blackboards with murals and motivational posters.

University president, Mary Sue Coleman, added that if Dennison Prison is a success, the University would have no problem repurposing East Hall and C.C. Little as well, buildings adjacent to Dennison.

Outgoing Gov. Granholm was also very excited about the new prison. "The Dennison program will more than double the number of new jobs created in the state of Michigan during my eight-year term of office. Also, the Census Bureau has told me that the detainees will be the first people to move into our great state in the 21st century," Granholm said.

In letters addressed to the Every Three Weekly, the detainees were less enthusiastic about the move. Wrote al-Qaeda mastermind, Khalid Sheik Mohammed, "We love the tropical weather and beautiful vistas in Cuba. My holy brothers tell me that Ann Arbor is brutally cold in the wintertime and the campus is overrun by filthy Jews. Also, we are all Ohio State fans. Allah Akbar!" He added, "P.S. Death to America! Death to Ann Arbor! Death to Wolverines!"

All is not lost for the detainees, however. At the press conference, Pres. Coleman and Director Lappin jointly announced an innovative "study-release" program that will allow the prisoners to enroll in classes on campus. Reports from Guantanamo suggest that the detainees are particularly interested in HISTORY 360: September 11 and NERS 211: Introduction to Nuclear Engineering.

Students were also generally in favor of the new plan. Said LSA junior, Ashley Cole, "As long as I never have to take a class in Dennison again, I don't care who they torture in there, students or detainees."