

Learn the history  
of East Lansing's  
oldest district

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JASON CHIOU/THE STATE NEWS

Builders' Hardware Co. was originally opened by two World War II veterans who hired Ronald Knapp as an employee, and he later purchased the business from them. The business has called East Lansing home since 1946.

# The State News

## A wealth of guidance

MSU gains 13.5 percent more mentor applicants as students see appeal of free room, board

By Brittany Shammus  
THE STATE NEWS

When Abhinav Katiyar looks back on his first few weeks in the U.S. as a freshman at MSU, he remembers sitting alone in the cafeteria. And he remembers one person — his resident mentor — waving him down and carrying his tray over to join him.

To Katiyar, a finance senior who is now a mentor in Rafter Hall, being a mentor means "paying it forward." He is what his mentor was for him: A first friend.

But the benefits of a job as a resident mentor encompass other types of payment: free room and board and a free meal plan, valued at \$7,076 for the 2008-09 school year. As Michigan's economic situation becomes even darker and tuition continues to climb, more and more students turn in applications for the job.

"(It) certainly saves a lot of money," said Val Meyers, MSU associate director of financial aid.

"If you can work and earn (free room and board) while you're in school and you don't have to repay after you leave, that's a good thing. For most students, what that's doing is making it possible for them to borrow less."

This year, MSU reported a 13.5 percent increase in applications, with 666 this year compared to 587 last year, said Residence Life Director Paul Goldblatt. Other universities in Michigan recorded a similar trend: The University of Michigan received about 30 percent more applications than last year and Western Michigan Univer-

sity received about 62 percent more, housing officials from the universities said.

It makes sense for students to apply for the position in hopes of saving money, said Rick Shipman, MSU's director of the Office of Financial Aid. Last year, a total of 21,788 MSU students received loans, he said. By the time of graduation, students on average owe \$18,500, but having room and board covered could significantly decrease the amount of money needed, he said.

"It's like a huge scholarship, but you have to work for it," he said. "It would reduce (a student's) reliance on loans and allow them to graduate owing less money, which is also a great thing."

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KATIE RAUSCH/THE STATE NEWS

Finance senior Abhinav Katiyar is in his second year as a mentor at Rafter Hall. While the applications for hall mentors have gone up, possibly as a result of the struggling economy, Katiyar said that wasn't the main reason he wanted the job.

INVESTIGATION

## MSU STUDENT DEATH CAUSED BY SINGLE STAB WOUND

By Kyle Feldscher  
THE STATE NEWS

A single, self-inflicted stab wound to the chest caused the death of MSU senior Don Ausman nearly three months ago, MSU police investigators and medical examiners concluded Tuesday.

Final toxicology reports found Ausman, a 22-year-old interdisciplinary studies in social science and international studies senior, had traces of drugs in his system at the time of his death.

Ingham County Medical Examiner Dean Sienko said the most significant drug was Hawaiian Baby Woodrose seeds, which contains a compound — lysergic acid amide, or LSA — that can cause psychosis, including hallucinations.

Ausman's blood and urine also contained THG-COOH, the chemical compound found in marijuana.

Ausman's stepfather Jim Wauldron issued a statement on behalf of the family stating Ausman had taken the seeds with his roommate to ease pain from a recent boxing class. The seeds, which are legal in the U.S. according to the statement, were purchased on eBay.

"Don was told that this seed would relax him, give him a buzz, not cause potentially hazardous hallucinations," Wauldron said in the statement.

LSA is characterized by federal regulations as a Schedule III substance, meaning a prescription is required to use it, but regulation of distribution is less stringent than other more common drugs, such as LSD.

MSU police Sgt. Florene McGlothian-Taylor said police determined through their investigation that Ausman had inflicted the knife wound on himself. She said police do not know why Ausman stabbed himself.

Ausman's body was discovered the morning of Jan. 28 in his Spartan Village apartment

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STANDING IN THE RAIN

Spartan Students Against Drunk Driving spread their message Tuesday at the rock on Farm Lane. Page 3A



Weather

Mostly Sunny  
High 59° | Low 34°  
Three-day forecast, Page 2A

## By the numbers

Resident mentor applicants on the rise

▲ 13.5 percent estimated increase at MSU

▲ 30 percent estimated increase at U-M

▲ 62 percent estimated increase at WMU

SOURCE: MSU, U-M AND WMU HOUSING ADMINISTRATORS

CITY

## Council discusses budget, proposes tax hikes

By Jeff Kannan

THE STATE NEWS

Water, sewage and aging city infrastructure were among items in the 2009-10 fiscal year budget discussed at Tuesday's East Lansing City Council work session.

Council members were presented with the first section of the city's 2009-10 fiscal year budget, which involved general funds.

The proposed general fund budget includes a 2.7 percent increase in water billing rates and a 5.9 percent increase in sewage rates, which would mean an approximate \$28 increase in taxes to residents each year, said Todd Sneathen, director of the East Lansing Department of Public Works.

"It's never nice when rates go up, but if it's raise the rates or a crumbling infrastructure, then raise the rates."

Scott Dombrowski, French senior

Rate increases are determined in part by consumption and cost return estimates, said Mary Haskell, the city's finance director.

French senior Scott Dombrowski said the proposed rate increase will add to his cost of living, but isn't too costly to bear.

But other students, such as

accounting junior Rich Katko, said a raised cost of utilities in addition to other student costs might make his financial situation difficult.

"As a student who doesn't have a tremendous amount of money to spend on, I don't think this would go over well with students," Katko said.

The city's overall proposed budget is about 40 percent larger than the 2008-09 budget, but most of the proposed

increase is related to City Center II items, Haskell said.

Annual budgets generally are similar in size to the previous year's budget, Haskell said, and without factoring in the City Center II theater and parking ramp, this year's proposed budget is similar.

"We're pretty consistent — we do a five-year financial plan that we update every year," Haskell said. "As it is with individuals, it's hard for government (in this economic time)."

Green buildings

The council also discussed a resolution to adopt the city's green building policy, which would require all buildings receiving city-approved economic development funds to

meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification levels.

The certification would call for buildings to follow environmentally friendly building standards that would be beneficial for the environment and human health, said Dave Smith, an environmental specialist for East Lansing.

Meeting most certification levels would cost builders between 0 and 2 percent of the total building cost,

Smith said. "Certainly, the benefits for tenants would be a better quality work environment," Smith said. "And the long-term costs of tenants would be less."