

Motels, taxis and four-to-a room: students struggle to cope with the overcrowding blues

Photo by James Sims

By Kysha Gary, Evonne Martyn, and Lavenia Dameron

When Charles Belfield returned to campus in August after sitting out a semester, he had no idea he'd be staying in a motel. He attempted to register for housing and was told by housing officials that there were no more available rooms on campus.

"They told me to go home and come back in the morning," said Belfield, a sophomore criminal justice major. "I stayed with a friend. It was two days before I was placed in Queen Elizabeth Motel."

Although Belfield said he enjoyed Queen Elizabeth's air conditioning and cable television, his biggest problem was transportation. Queen Elizabeth on Highway 17 South is several miles away from ECSU's campus and Belfield doesn't own a car.

"The school was supposed to provide transportation but they really didn't," said Belfield.

Even though the school planned to reimburse students, Belfield felt that having to rely on taxis almost every day was still an expensive inconvenience.

"We had to think about saving for the rest of the week. Sometimes we couldn't eat breakfast because we had to choose between cab fare and food."

Belfield said he and the other students had to vacate their rooms on Labor Day weekend.

"An ECSU official suggested that we stay in the infirmary over the weekend but I stayed with a friend."

Since then, the students who were housed in the motel have been moved to either on-campus rooms or into private residences leased by the University. Belfield, who has been moved to Wamack, said he is glad that the school has improved his housing.

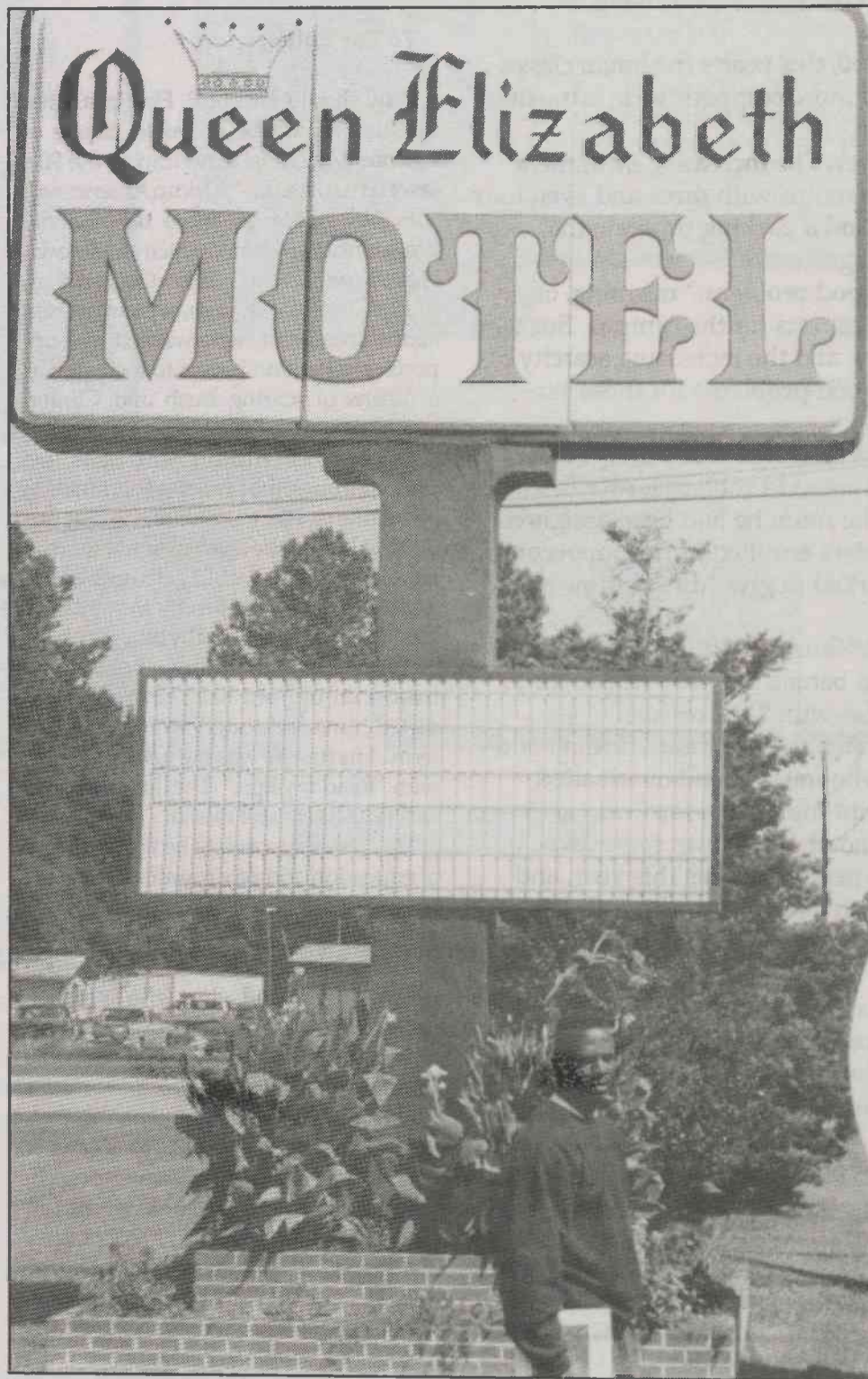
"I'm satisfied with Wamack because I'm closer to the cafe, my classes and the library," he said.

The overcrowding problem in Wamack caught ECSU sophomore Keith Elliot by surprise.

"When I got here, there were already three guys in the room I was assigned," said Elliot. "I couldn't get a key because they didn't have any left."

While waiting for a key Elliot bunked with friends. He eventually went to live with his aunt off campus.

Belfield and Elliot are two of approximately 75 students directly affected by the housing shortage. According to Dr. Leon White, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, only 45 students have been affected by overcrowding, fifteen students in Mitchell Lewis and 30 in Womack.



ECSU student Charles Belfield began his semester as a guest of the Queen Elizabeth Motel, miles from campus. Belfield was one of several dozen students caught in this year's housing crunch which resulted from the highest enrollment in ECSU's history.

However a statement from ECSU's Director of Housing, Kenneth Roberts indicates as many as 75 may have been affected, including students who have been put in motels and private residences. The University only has the capacity to house 929 students, according to Roberts.

"We are housing 1004 students this semester," White said.

The University's student population has increased by 15 percent for the fall semester of 1992-93 compared to the fall semester of 91-92, according to White.

ECSU now has approximately 2003 students enrolled, including 542 new freshmen.

ECSU officials say the housing crunch

stems, in part, from a higher percentage of students who are accepted at ECSU actually enrolling.

"For the past two years 49 percent of accepted students actually enrolled," said White. "This year 64 percent of accepted students enrolled. As with any business or profession we rely on data for our planning. With a significant increase in the rate of students enrolling, our plans and projections took a beating."

The University also has to play a guessing game as to the number of accepted students who will actually enroll, said Chancellor Jimmy Jenkins.

"When we accept students, we have no guarantee that these students will actu-

ally enroll," said Jenkins. "Students will often times apply to three or four universities and get accepted by all three or four. So we can only count that student when he or she shows up. The difference this year is we had a higher percent of students to enroll than in previous years."

Jenkins said he believes the overcrowding the University has encountered with the increase in enrollment is a "good" problem.

"It is good that the school is growing," said Jenkins. "It is an inconvenience that we did not have sufficient housing to accommodate the numbers."

The increase in enrollment at ECSU has also had an impact on parking and classrooms.

Some ECSU professors and students feel the effects of overcrowding in their classrooms, especially the GE courses. Dr. Erwin Ford, an assistant professor in the Department of Language, Literature & Communications, said he has 39 students in a Composition and Literature class and 39 in a World Literature class.

Having that many students "makes it impossible to give students the kind of personal attention that they need to become good writers and scholars," he said.

Ford said that compared to other universities he has taught in, 25 students is normal for composition classes. "In larger classes, students feel left out and are permitted to hide," he added.

One student who is one of 54 students in a World Civilization class said she doesn't feel she is getting a quality education.

"It's so many that the professor doesn't even take roll," the student said. "If I go, I usually just go to sleep because he doesn't know if I'm there or not."

ECSU officials say the overcrowded classes are temporary, pointing out that they can use the expanded enrollment to justify hiring more faculty.

Roger McLean, Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance, said that the January, 1993 opening of the new residence hall will alleviate the housing crunch on campus.

"The new dorm will solve a lot of housing problems," McLean said. "It will provide a state-of-the-art facility for students to live in."

McLean said the University is continuing to work on the parking problem.

"Every day we're trying to address the parking situation," said McLean. "There will be parking spaces after the new dorm is finished, an improved parking lot near Vaughan Center, and a new parking lot near the Jimmy R. Jenkins Science Complex."

ECSU officials are also considering the possibility of renovating Butler Hall,