

D O R M 3 4

Fosters Community with Residents in Manhattan

Most people's first college living experiences don't include views and access to the heart of Manhattan. But for Mercy College international student Thea Ivarsoy '23, who hails from Oslo, Norway, her first living situation after leaving home has exceeded expectations.

One of the first students living in MercyManhattan's new student residence hall, known as Dorm34, Ivarsoy starts and ends her days in the center of Midtown, across from the Empire State Building, with spectacular views of the city's famed Herald Square.

Ivarsoy's first-ever Thanksgiving may take the cake – or pie. While the parade was not open to the public, she and a few of her fellow Dorm34 residents watched Macy's historic Thanksgiving Day Parade not on television, but right from their windows.

They complimented the once-in-a-lifetime experience with a Thanksgiving meal and exchanged expressions of gratitude for their floormates, their comforts of home, and for the Mercy staff members who have supported their assimilations to college and New York City.

"From our PACT mentors to the resident assistants – you can ask them anything, anytime – they are always there to help," Ivarsoy said.

Ivarsoy started her college journey at a unique time for Mercy, not to mention the world. The COVID-19 pandemic forced Mercy to reimagine life for the first cohort of students expected to move into Dorm34





for the fall 2020 semester. For example, due to social distancing mandates, the number of students allowed to reside in the hall was significantly limited, the move-in process was a logistical challenge, and students were required to quarantine for two weeks after their arrival and continue to follow safety guidelines.

Despite these hurdles, Ivarsoy and the rest of the undergraduates residing in Dorm34 – a small but mighty crew that consists of several international students – have become a close-knit group due in part to their circumstances, but also because of the familial and engaging atmosphere created by Mercy residential staff. For example, the Bove Media Center has become a hub of activity, not only for state-of-the-art classes but also an integral place where students gather socially for movie nights.

Mercy Interim Director of Residential Life Alexander Colón, who also resides in Dorm34, managed the balancing act of mitigating risk associated with the pandemic during move-in, while also fostering that spirit of collegiality. A self-proclaimed, “res life nerd through and through,” Colón’s unique living situation – residing where he works – allows him to perpetuate the supportive environment he so valued during his formative years – one that encourages students to explore who they are as individuals. “Now it’s like our small but mighty student cohort, and the residential assistants, have

known each other their entire lives,” he said.

Dorm34, and the MercyManhattan Campus, provide the ideal physical spaces for students to flourish. Completed in July 2020 “in a phenomenal state,” as described by Vice President for Operations and Facilities Tom Simmonds, Dorm34 is one integral part of a greater concept that is MercyManhattan.

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Working in tandem with SL Green Realty Corp. to renovate MercyManhattan and build Dorm34, Simmonds and Kevin Joyce, Mercy’s vice president of student affairs, were successful in implementing their goals and concepts for Dorm34 and the greater MercyManhattan Campus. They produced a vibrant, functional, and modern living space on the 7th floor of the building and multi-use spaces on the 4th and 3rd floors, consisting of a living room, learning commons, library and cafeteria, where students can easily “bump into opportunity.” The floors allow seamless transition between living and learning, while the location allows for immediate access to

Manhattan and all it has to offer.

“The common space for gathering means that learning isn’t just happening in the classroom,” explained Simmonds. “It facilitates interaction between faculty and students, which is key to retention and student success.”

Joyce added, “In addition to increased support from the academic community, students are a stone’s throw away from the center of the financial world and a number of other industries. The campus breaks down barriers for students to enter these sought-after markets upon graduation.”

In all, the completion of Dorm34 was a great success from a building, construction and design standpoint. “The fit and finish are nicer than anyone could have ever hoped for,” Joyce said.

SL Green delivered as a partner and was essential in navigating challenges that arose from COVID-19. “In collaboration with SL Green, we carried out our vision in terms of density of rooms, cost-effectiveness, bed count, energy efficiency and self-sustainability on time and on budget,” Simmonds said. “And we included all the things that make a house a home.”

Topping the smooth construction process may be the fact that Dorm34 goes above and beyond to feed the dreams of Mercy students. As put by Ivarsoy, “I’m young and living in the middle of a city – New York City. I’m grateful for all the campus and the location has to offer – and for the opportunity.”