We offer you an update on the use of the House of 100,000 Welcomes (Cead Mile Failte/CMF).
Perhaps it would be helpful if some back-round information were shared first.

Opportunities for new relationships are always on the horizon. The journey of relationships that I would like to share began a number years ago when 20 Loras students showed up for a 7:30 a.m. Mass in honor of Fr. Doug’s birthday. Around the Sign of Peace time, Marge Healy turned to me and asked if I thought there would be enough eggs if we invited the students down to breakfast. I can’t remember my response or if someone ran downstairs to alert the cooks, but what I do remember is that they all stayed, ate heartily, and mixed and mingled with the sisters. The birthday breakfast tradition began and continued for a number of years.

During those breakfast gatherings, I made the rounds in search of musicians and cantors. Over the years we have been blessed with the presence of students willing to share their musical talents with our community. They feel very free to bring their room-mates and friends along. Relationships are cultivated over coffee and conversation, sometimes a tour of our home and always an eagerness to return.

For the past number of years, the Breitbach Catholic Thinkers and Leaders from Loras have met at Mt. Loretto for their annual weekend retreat. A highlight for the 60 students, as well as the Sisters, is the opportunity to have dinner together. Again, a time to renew and reverence relationships.

During the late spring of 2014, two good friends by the name of Chelsea and Rachel, un-be-knownst to the other, stopped by to inquire if there were internship opportunities available at Mt. Loretto. They really wanted to work here among the sisters and staff. There were some projects that could use assistance, yes, but more than that, these young women were asking to be and work among us. We, as a leadership team, made the commitment to respond to their desires by providing internship opportunities. Great Lakes grant applications for these internships were also available and utilized.

When Chelsea and Rachel left, Miriam arrived...and then Cassie, Nicole, Allegra and Anna. Coordinated by Sr. Ann Jackson and Jane Buse, internships involved a variety of possibilities: furthering a Wellness program, taking pictures during community celebrations, one-on-one computer tutoring, weekly Lectio Divina, zoom conversations with mission sisters, graphic design projects and book discussions. Student-led Prayer and Worship services were held in Sacred Heart Chapel and together, the young, middle-age and elders, listened and contemplated the Word of God, spoken and sung. Roads led to Loras, too, as Sisters showed up for volleyball games, choir concerts, end-of-semester presentations, Friday coffees and the 9:00 Wednesday evening Masses.
So when the House of 100,000 Welcomes became available (for seven months) and the women were at the same time interested in a space to gather - need and opportunity came together – a providential response.

This inter-generational journey of relationships is guided by the desire on the part of these interns and their peers to have a space apart from their academic life where they can ponder the use of their gifts and talents in service to the world, enjoy a meal or game night with one another and receive witness and wisdom from a generation other than their own. It is generating something new – a promise for the future!

Second semester holds the possibility of additional gatherings that are consonant with our mission and charism. Loras faculty members mentoring First Generation Scholarship students, Thinkers and Leaders committed to inter-faith dialogue and civic engagement have expressed interest.

We will offer them the space of the House of 100,000 Welcomes for the next four months and assess its use in May. Should an initiative emerge that impacts future use of this community asset, the community-at-large will be invited to engage in a process. Communication and dialogue with our newly-elected leaders will be on-going, as well.

In the meantime, we continue to be open to new possibilities, grateful for the inter-generational sharing of wisdom, experience, energy and resources.