ife in a dorm. If there's one place where personalities can make or break a relationship, it's in a close, shared space. And let's face it—sometimes, roommates just don't jibe. She stays up late most nights working furiously on her business; her roomie plays guitar and writes music. He's a vegan; his bunkmate, a VIP at McDonald's.

Wouldn't it be great to live in a community with like-minded individuals? That's exactly what a group of students decided 10 years ago. Not surprisingly, they were entrepreneurs, and they wanted to create a living space where students who focused on business ventures could inspire and learn from each other. Being action oriented, they went to the Arthur M. Blank Center for Entrepreneurship for help in realizing their idea. Soon after pitching the concept to the Office of Campus Life, the group founded Babson's first living-learning community, the Entrepreneurial Tower (or E-Tower).

Since then, the idea has flourished. Nine living-learning communities now exist, each with a dedicated floor in a residence hall (many in Van Winkle) complete with a common room and kitchen. The two newest, formed just this school year, are the Philanthropy and Sophomore Steering towers. The second oldest community is the Investment Tower (I-Tower), followed by Women Giving Back. The other towers—Green, Healthy-Living (H), Liberal Arts, and Origins for Necessary Equality (ONE)—came into being in the fall of 2008.
Each tower is as different as its name indicates. Ask students why they live there, however, and you’ll get similar responses: “We share the same passion.”

“I like that there are a whole bunch of women who are there for a similar reason,” says Nevart Varadian ’13 about living in Women Giving Back, which aims to increase involvement in community service, focusing in particular on charities for women and children. “It’s a place where you can have a sense of community.”

“I’ve gotten to know 20 people who share my value system and challenge me to expand my commitment to sustainability on a daily basis,” says Sebastian Florez ’11 of the Green Tower, which promotes environmental sustainability in life and business. “We’re always bouncing ideas off each other for ways we can live sustainably or start a business focused on sustainability.”

Eat, breathe, learn
The living-learning communities are real examples of President Leonard Schlesinger’s concept of 24/7—continuing the learning experience outside of the classroom. To start, the towers are run completely by students, according to Lisa MacDonald, director, residential living, Campus Life. Students present the ideas for the towers, choose who lives in them, come up with activities, and manage day-to-day care and conflicts. Babson provides advisers and support if needed, but the students take charge. “They’re still college students,” says MacDonald, “so there are student concerns that we need to address. But we try to put it back on the community and say, ‘What are you going to do about it?’ That’s a big piece of this whole experience—students learn to take ownership.”

Other lessons students may learn vary and, in part, are influenced by the towers’ missions. In the E-Tower, for example, members strive for an atmosphere that “stimulates the development and implementation of business ideas.” To that end, the tower recently painted all of the walls in its common spaces with IdeaPaint, surrounding residents in dry-erase surfaces for brainstorming. The paint was donated by IdeaPaint, which was founded by Babson alumni, notes Jaclyn Noble ’12 of E-Tower.

Every week E-Tower invites the Babson community to an open forum where students can pitch business ideas, receive help with a business problem, or listen to an invited speaker. “We believe that fusing together entrepreneurial minds from across campus lays a foundation for unlimited possibilities,” says Noble.

Students in the I-Tower hold weekly meetings for members during which they discuss current events and issues related to finance and investing. Several members also pitch a position on a security. The tower holds campus-wide events as well, including an annual month-long stock market competition. “That’s greatly anticipated each year,” says member Anna Kazimierczak ’11, MSA ’11. “I joined the tower because I thought the individuals living with me would have a lot of knowledge to share,” she adds. “I’m happy to say I was right.”

Entrepreneurship gains a social twist in the Philanthropy Tower, where students aspire to use an entrepreneurial mindset to foster humanitarian spirit. “We want to create change,” says member Renee Edwards ’13. “Our tagline is ‘redefining profit.’” Many of its members already worked with the Bernard Center for Public Service before forming the tower, says Edwards, but wanted to do more. “How do we go beyond the hours volunteered? One thing we’re thinking...”
Beyond business

It’s not surprising to find entrepreneurial- and socially responsible-themed towers—impressive as they are—at Babson. But in many of the towers, students choose a different focus. Members of the Liberal Arts Tower, for example, want to expand their intellectual and cultural education beyond business issues. “It’s a place where students can discuss and learn about arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences,” says Sanchon Dillup-Jones ’12. “It complements the business curriculum.”

In H-Tower, students promote a substance-free lifestyle. “Our programs focus on developing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle in all aspects of everyday life,” says Hannah Ainbinder ’12. ONE Tower houses members from around the country and the globe. “It’s fascinating to hear and share our different experiences about life, business, and culture,” says Marcial Carrion ’12. “Living in the tower helps me gain knowledge about different backgrounds that I couldn’t learn in any textbook.”

Nearby in the Coleman residence hall, members of the Sophomore Steering Tower want to build identity and promote spirit among students in the sophomore class. “Babson has a first-year experience and curriculum,” says Tyler Murphy ’13, one of the tower’s founders along with Christine Laubach ’13. “And then as an upperclassman, you’re already engaged in the community.” But the sophomore experience, he explains, lacked coherence.

Both Murphy and Laubach were already on their class’ steering committee, so when the Office of Campus Life suggested establishing a sophomore tower, they decided to go for it. The two didn’t have long to produce a proposal—about a week. But they pulled it off, and since then the tower has sponsored a number of events, including a welcome back social, a Babson abroad session, Thanksgiving dinner, and a wellness week (which, note to parents, was quite popular).

To Laubach and Murphy, the experience has been worth the effort. Not only has it been fun, but they’ve learned a lot. “It’s the epitome of entrepreneurial spirit,” says Murphy. “There was nothing like this before, and Christy, all of the tower members, and I have made the best of it and given it life.”

Director MacDonald beams when she hears stories like this about the students. “That’s what it means to be part of a living-learning environment,” she says. “You go to class, and then you come back to your residence hall and bring what you learned back there. You have those conversations. It’s about experiential learning. It really is 24/7.”

“I grew up in a very musical family, and the arts were always a big part of my life. I wanted to live in a community with other students who share my interest in music as well as film, theater, literature, and visual arts.”

Maria Mutter ’12, Liberal Arts Tower

“I lived in Park Manor North, a substance-free dorm for freshmen. I visited the H-Tower as part of my FY’s [First Year Seminar] class and instantly fell in love with the atmosphere, the residents, everything. I knew that I wanted to continue to live in a substance-free environment. Living in H-Tower is like living in one big apartment.”

Hannah Ainbinder ’12, Healthy-Living Tower

“We wanted to unify our class. The Office of Campus Life came to us and said, ‘The sophomore experience isn’t as great as it should be.’ The idea of a sophomore tower really excited me. I’m already on my class’ steering committee. My heart belongs to 2013, and I’ll do anything for my class.”

Christine Laubach ’13, president, Sophomore Steering Tower

“I was one of the first five people to be accepted to the Investment Tower coming out of high school. While I already had a lot of enthusiasm for the subjects, I didn’t really have a lot of expertise. I figured that the Investment Tower would greatly improve my knowledge, and I was right.”

Matthew Schwartz ’13, Investment Tower

“During high school, I was very involved with multicultural groups and participated in diversity events. I wanted to continue my passion for diversity throughout college, and that is why I joined. The friends that I have made and the experiences that we have been through cannot be replicated elsewhere.”

Marcial Carrion ’12, Origins for Necessary Equality Tower