A History of Sims Cottage and the Home Management Program

The John F. Sims Cottage was built in 1915 for the Domestic Science Department of the Stevens Point Normal School to help students learn how to run a household. The cottage was unique because it was the first of its kind built for that purpose. Most of the home management houses at the time were old single-family homes. The Sims Cottage was a duplex that could house two groups of students with one supervisor.

Groups of four senior women were assigned to live in the cottage for a semester with Bessie May Allen acting as supervisor. While living in the cottage “every young woman serves for at least one week as a cook, each being very specific.” They shopped for their own groceries, prepared the meals, did the laundry, cleaned the house, and controlled their budget. The students even had to maintain the coal furnace! In addition, they were required to host a formal dinner, usually for two professors and their spouses. The money that was left at the end of the semester would be used to buy something new for the house.

In 1915 the Home Economics Club presented the Sims Cottage with gifts, including a set of china, glassware and a silver coffee service. When home economics ended as discipline, some of those items were saved and are now housed in the College of Professional Studies and in the Founders Room of Old Main.

During the fall of 1918, the Spanish flu swept across much of the nation. From October 16 until the middle of November, the school’s doors were closed to prevent the spreading of the epidemic. Sims Cottage was converted to an infirmary, to isolate students who did contract the flu. The Home Economics Department provided meals to patients recuperating in the facility.
In 1948 Bessie May Allen allowed the husbands of the married home economics senior girls to live with them during their stay at the Sims Cottages. The project received both state and national recognition because this was the only experiment of its kind at a practice house.

In 1952 the Sims Cottage was torn down to make room for a new college library. The Home Management Program was moved into a house across the street from Old Main and operated in that location for another 26 years under the supervision of Orthula Doescher. In May 1978 the Home Management program was suspended and the American Suzuki Talent Education Program moved into the facility.

The Former Home Management House is now known as the American Suzuki Talent Education House.