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NEWS RELEASE

**THE VIRTUAL ICE BREAKER:
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON'S ONLINE DORM FEATURED IN EDUCATION JOURNAL**

DAYTON, Ohio — It's an awkward rite of passage for incoming college students. It's that moment when they meet their roommates for the first time.

At the University of Dayton, roommates meet online months before they step foot in their residence hall rooms. Approximately 1,500 of 1,800 incoming students logged into a special Web site within two days of receiving their personalized "virtual room" user name and password, and another 100 had logged in within one week to begin their educational journey, according to a case study published in the most recent issue of *Educause Quarterly*.

The journal is the premiere higher education information technology journal in the world. The article can be found here: <http://www.educause.edu/pub/eq/eqm00/eqm004.html>.

Each interactive room features contact information for roommates, an instant chat system for private messages between roommates, a checklist of suggested items to bring to campus and information on interactive training sessions on the computer, according to the article. Students can see photos and video of their room, and if they want to get a head start on the reading list for their first-year experience course, it's there to be tackled. In addition, students can search for other residents with similar interests.

"Roommates can look at the list of standard items that students bring for their rooms, check off what they intend to bring and then e-mail that to their roommates. Mom and dad won't have to lug a TV up four flights of stairs only to find that the roommate already has one in the room," said Brian Young, chief technologist and director of educational technology

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initiatives at the University of Dayton, who wrote the journal article.

UD's Webmentors, students with expertise in Web applications and design lead by UD senior Mike Potts, developed the online dorm, which has received accolades from jittery, soon-to-be college students. "I was a little nervous about college because it was so far away from my home, but the online dorm helps you to get a feel for the University, and it also makes you feel like they really care about you," one student wrote in an e-mail. "I love the fact that I can chat online with my roommate and that we can plan out what our room will look like; all of this makes me feel a little less apprehensive about moving away from home."

Young said the online tool is less expensive than mass mailing information to first-year students and provides a personal touch that makes the first face-to-face meeting between roommates easier.

"There is massive potential for colleges and universities to cultivate the energy and eagerness that recent high school graduates have toward their anticipated college experience long before they arrive on campus," Young said.

The University of Dayton has earned a national reputation for its educational technology initiatives. It's been named the top wired university in Ohio and the most wired Catholic university in the nation. Overall UD ranks 21st in *Yahoo! Internet Life's* annual "Most Wired Colleges" survey of universities and colleges.

UD is among a fraction of universities that requires students to own computers. About 90 percent of faculty members are using the tools of technology — e-mail, Web sites, threaded discussions and list serves — in their classes. All University-owned housing on the highly residential campus — space for 5,645 students in residence halls, apartments and 350 houses in a 25-block campus neighborhood — is fully wired for direct high-speed Internet connection. The University provides free dial-in connections for the small percentage of undergraduate students who live off campus or in non-University housing.