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NEWS RELEASE

40 PERCENT IN TWO YEARS: SCHOOL OF LAW APPLICATIONS SURGE NEW STUDENTS GET HEAD START THROUGH "VIRTUAL" SUMMER COURSE

DAYTON, Ohio — It's not easy getting into law school these days. At the University of Dayton, 10 applicants are vying for every seat in this fall's first-year class.

The University of Dayton has seen an 11 percent upswing in applications over last year's strong volume. Seat deposits are up 9 percent. Sixty incoming law students — double the number anticipated by school officials — are taking a new, no-credit online summer honors course, "In the Service of Justice," as a way to get a head start on law school. The free monthlong course also serves as an early resume builder.

"It's a very competitive environment for law school right now," said Janet Hein, assistant dean and director of admissions and financial aid at the University of Dayton School of Law. "Our reputation is growing. The (slow) economy coupled with low interest rates also make law school attractive. It's not nearly as hard to go to law school today as five years ago because the interest rates on students loans are so much lower."

As of May, 97,039 persons had applied to attend U.S. law schools for 2004, according to the Law School Admission Council. Applicants are applying earlier and to five law schools or more to increase their likelihood of acceptance, according to the LSAC. While LSAC statistics show applications up at 123 of the nation's 187 law schools, the University of Dayton's application volume is running higher than the national average of 6.1 percent. It's one of 72 law schools nationwide enjoying an application increase of more than 10 percent over last year. Since 2002, applications have jumped 40 percent at UD's School of Law.

The University of Dayton is piloting an online summer course for a select group of students "to pique their interest and let them get their feet wet," according to Hein. The law school may expand participation to more students after its experimental year. New York native Jay

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Rivera applied to eight law schools and jumped at the chance to participate in the summer honors course.

“I was intrigued by the opportunity to get to know some of my fellow classmates sooner,” he said. “As I prepare to enter school this August, I already have two solid connections that I’m looking forward to developing further.”

During the course, which runs through July 23, students will read a number of legal articles, including one on the Socratic method and another on a state bar association suing title companies for unauthorized practice of law. They will chat online with each other — and with two current law students and two recent graduates studying for the bar exam. Guest lecturers will include Roger Makley, best known as Pete Rose’s attorney, local judges Walter Rice and Michael Merz and the director of UD’s flagship law and technology program, Jeff Matsuura. The students will write a three- to six-page essay on a legal issue and compete for a writing award — and perhaps the chance to publish the piece in a legal outlet.

“It’s designed to give them a taste for what’s to come in law school,” said course developer Susan Elliott, assistant professor and head of public services in UD’s Zimmerman Law Library. “The course emphasizes the role of lawyers in establishing and maintaining justice in society.”

Elliott worked closely with legal publisher LexisNexis to launch the online venture.

“I think it’s a very innovative idea. I’m not familiar with any other law school using LexisNexis Web courses in this way,” said Melissa Bowling, LexisNexis account executive. “It’s a virtual classroom that gets the students more comfortable with the idea of coming to law school.”

Kristina Teague, a former art teacher in Cincinnati, thinks the course will give her a leg up in law school. “Why not jump in and test the temperature of the water before you are expected to swim? Am I anxious? Maybe. Law school is a huge investment of time and money. I have made a commitment and want to take advantage of all that law school offers, credit or no credit.”

Teague, 24, applied to five law schools and received multiple acceptance letters. She doesn’t mind giving up part of her summer to take the course because it’s an investment in her future. “There is so much to learn, and my future clients deserve my devotion and will expect expertise,” she said. “I cannot miss out on preparation.”