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University of Dayton

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UD REFINES COMPUTER REQUIREMENT, NOTEBOOKS TO ENHANCE CONNECTED LEARNING

DAYTON, Ohio — With an eye toward enhancing the “connected learning” it emphasizes, the University of Dayton will refine its computer requirement and offer only notebook computers to undergraduates, beginning with the class that enters in fall 2003.

“The heart of education at the University of Dayton is connected learning,” said Fred Pestello, senior vice president for educational affairs and provost. “With notebook computers, students can take that tool into the classroom, into the labs, to study groups. They can take it home for Christmas or long weekends or into the classrooms where they are student teaching. And, if students choose to equip their notebooks with wireless access, they can use our wireless networks and work in the food court or Kennedy Union Plaza if they want to.”

Connected learning at UD means offering students a combination of liberal arts and professional course work mixed with real-life opportunities to lead and serve. The broad view provided by connected learning prepares graduates to solve the complex problems that organizations and communities face in the modern world, Pestello said.

The University carries that out in a technology-enhanced learning environment that has earned UD a reputation for technology initiatives that mark it as a national leader in Catholic higher education. In fall 1999, officials instituted a computer requirement for incoming students and began building a $4.5 million fiber-optic infrastructure on campus and in the student neighborhood.

This year, UD is the most-wired University in the state and ranks as the 16th most-wired university nationally, according to Yahoo! Internet Life’s annual “Most Wired Colleges” survey of universities and colleges. In the 2002 Kaplan/Newsweek College Catalog, UD’s admission Web site was named one of the top five in the country.

Two options will be available to students, a standard business-class notebook and a power notebook. Versions for the 2002 fall class are priced at $1,650 and $2,250, with the annual cost factored into each student’s financial aid determination.

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"First- and second-year students particularly recognize notebooks as an important tool for their education," said Tom Skill, associate provost for educational IT. "It's part of their professional preparedness. And desktops have limitations in that the dorm may not be the best place to work. Students know they can throw a notebook computer into a backpack and wander over to some nook on campus where they can find the calm and quiet—or the noise—they need to do the work."

For faculty, "this gives us the real opportunity to rethink how we do courses," Skill said. "Virtually every classroom can be a computer lab, if so desired. A lot of faculty members would like to use computers in the classroom, but logistically it's hard to move classes to computer labs. This will certainly enhance students' abilities to work in teams."

About 90 percent of UD's faculty use at least the basic tools of technology—Web pages, e-mail, list serves and discussion groups—in their teaching, and 92 percent of students surveyed reported they have used the Internet to complete course assignments. Psychology 101 is offered completely online, and Learning Teacher Center on campus explores how technology is changing the way professors teach and students learn.

Prospective students appreciate the technology. Deposits, the commitment phase of the application process, are up more than 14 percent over last year at this time and up more than 31 percent over 2000.

Informed of the coming notebook requirement, students slated to come to UD this fall are choosing that option by a wide margin. Of the nearly 400 students who have ordered their computers for the fall, 77 percent have chosen notebooks.

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