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Colleges Nationwide Feel Impact of "Baby Bust";
UD Freshman Class Smaller But Brighter

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DAYTON, Ohio, June 29, 1990--The University of Dayton is projecting a full-time undergraduate enrollment this fall of between 6,400 and 6,500--well above the University’s budgeted enrollment figure of 6,150--and the incoming class is expected to "reflect the continuing trend of more outstanding students selecting UD," according to Richard T. Ferguson, associate provost for enrollment management.

At the graduate level, enrollment is either stable or booming, particularly in the School of Law where a record 1,950 students are vying for 175 seats. However, at the undergraduate level, after two peak enrollment years the University of Dayton is beginning to feel the impact of a predicted demographic change: a shrinking pool of traditional college-age students. The 1990-91 UD freshman class is expected to be between 10 and 12 percent smaller than last year’s class of 1,705 freshmen, though academically stronger. A record 18 National Merit Scholars will enroll, applications for the prestigious Honors Program are up 25 percent, and average college test scores are higher than any previous year, according to Ferguson. In the School of Engineering, UD finds itself on the opposite side of a national trend. Approximately 29 percent of the incoming engineering majors will be women--nearly double the national average. Nationally, the average is 15.5 percent, according to the Commission on Professionals and Science and Technology.

"As reports begin to come in from private colleges and
universities, large and small, it is becoming apparent that our anticipated decline in new student enrollment is typical of and, in many cases, not as bad as what is happening across the state and throughout the country," Ferguson said.

Northeastern University in Boston, the country’s largest private university, is projecting a 25 percent drop in freshman enrollment, according to The Northeastern Voice, the university’s faculty/staff newspaper. The June 8 issue of the Wall Street Journal reports that Oberlin College officials are predicting a 21 percent decline in the college’s freshman class. According to a May 1 survey by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors reported in the New York Times, 21 percent more of its member schools still had openings in their freshman classes this year than at the same time last year. Of the 672 institutions that responded to the survey, 499 still had openings.

The nation’s pool of college-age students isn’t expected to increase until at least 1995. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, the number of high school seniors is expected to drop from 2.7 million to 2.4 million--or 11.8 percent--between 1988 and 1994.

"When the market shrinks as rapidly as this market is shrinking, you have a real challenge," Ferguson said. "Within the next five years, we will be looking for new ways to communicate the distinctive quality of the University of Dayton to new and established student markets and to secure our niche in the marketplace."

For the 1990-91 academic year, which begins August 22, Ferguson is projecting a freshman class of 1,500 to 1,525. Although the office of admission continues to receive seat deposits from entering freshmen, Ferguson offers this early profile of the 1990-91 class:

* 24 percent come from the top 10 percent of their high school class;  
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* 75 percent rank in the top half of their class;

* 15 percent of the incoming class will be designated as "University Scholars," up from 12 percent a year ago. University Scholars finished in the top 10 percent of their high school classes and scored at least 28 on the ACT or 1200 on the SAT college aptitude tests.

* a record 18 National Merit Scholars will enroll. The University of Dayton currently ranks third among Catholic schools--behind the University of Notre Dame and Georgetown--in the number of National Merit Scholarship recipients who have enrolled in its freshman class over the past five years;

* 47 high school valedictorians and 23 salutatorians will be part of the freshman class;

* black students will make up approximately 3 percent of the class;

* the men-to-women ratio is expected to be 52 percent to 48 percent; and

* approximately 93 percent, including many Dayton-area residents, will live on campus.

The University of Dayton, Ohio's largest independent university and the nation's eighth largest Catholic university, is founded and sponsored by the Marianists, a Roman Catholic religious order. Approximately 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students attended UD in 1989-90.

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