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UD BUCKS NATIONAL TREND, APPLICATIONS UP AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

DAYTON, Ohio -- The state of the economy and a shrinking pool of high school graduates are contributing to a drop in applications at private universities around the country. But the admission office at the University of Dayton, Ohio's largest private university, has seen a marked increase in the number of applications from high school juniors and seniors and in the number of prospective student visits to campus.

Compared to 1990, UD has received 23 percent more applications for admission from prospective full-time freshmen through the end of February. "In fact, by late February the office of admission was slowing its rate of acceptance to assure that its August 1991 first-year class does not significantly exceed the targeted size of 1,680," said Richard T. Ferguson, associate provost for enrollment management.

According to the March 6, 1991, issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, private universities nationally are reporting application drops of 5 to 16 percent.

"The first signs of a major increase in applications were evident last summer when inquiries and campus visits far exceeded expectations," Ferguson said. "The interest did not let up, and mail continued to run almost 10 percent ahead of last year through Christmas, and campus visits remained 33 percent ahead."
The University's tuition increase, announced in January, did not dampen the enthusiasm of the marketplace. "To date, our admission deposits for enrollment in the first-year class are 142 percent ahead of a year ago," Ferguson said. "In many cases, these students and their parents will receive significant financial assistance, and many others will borrow or pay on a deferred payment plan. Relative to the private school competition, the University of Dayton is both reasonably priced and responsive with scholarships and financial aid."

What else is UD doing to resist major economic and demographic pressures? Ferguson identifies five key dimensions to the UD recruitment effort:

(1) Current students and faculty participate in the recruitment effort. This fall, student volunteers called more than 7,000 high school students to tell them about their UD experience, and faculty met with almost all of the past year's 3,500 visiting students;

(2) The direct-mail effort at the beginning of UD's recruitment cycle is among the largest of any college or university in the Midwest. This effort helps to build an annual inquiry pool of almost 60,000 students;

(3) UD has carefully researched its market and is able to target its message to different constituencies. Most recruitment messages focus on students' academic interests;

(4) UD is reaping the benefits of more than 25 years of cultivating the support of high school guidance offices. UD staff members visit more than 1,500 high schools each year, attend nearly 550 college nights and host approximately 25 special events, often with assistance from UD's 62,000 alumni and parents of current students; and

(5) UD lives up to most of the expectations of visiting prospective students and enrolling students: "the word spreads when students are happy with their college selection," Ferguson said.

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Last fall, 90 percent of the University of Dayton's first-year students came from nine states: Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Missouri. But UD actively recruits students in 27 states and Puerto Rico and enrolls students from 42 states, Puerto Rico and 40 foreign countries. "We plan to continue to expand marketing efforts to enroll an even more national and international student body as its regional market continues to shrink," Ferguson said.

Founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary (Marianists), a Roman Catholic religious order, The University of Dayton is among the 10 largest Catholic universities in the country. Approximately 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students currently attend UD.

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For media interviews, contact Dick Ferguson at (513) 229-3717.