

# Universities Try Letting Students Make Roommate Matches

By Diane Suchetka  
Knight Ridder Newspapers

They seemed like the perfect college roommates. Meagan Bailey and Melissa Doss.

The UNC Charlotte education majors are both from the N.C. mountains, both country music fans who love to work out. They even took the same classes their freshman year, so they went to bed at the same time, woke up at the same time.

They had so much in common, they displayed their loathing for each other in identical ways.

The silent treatment.

"For weeks," Doss says.

And then they'd explode.

Instead of perfect first-year college roommates, they ended up a perfect example of how

tough it can be for colleges to turn total strangers into friends who want to share a room the size of a closet.

This is the time of year when universities learn just how hard the matching can be. September and October, for many schools, is roommate-switching time.

Colleges try all sorts of ways to keep the time-consuming changes to a minimum.

One way is a new computer program called WebRoomz, which works something like an on-line dating service.

About a dozen schools, including UNC Greensboro, are using \_

or are about to try \_ what the Atlanta company says is the only computer program in the United States that gives students the

opportunity to choose their own roommates.

For a minimum of \$35,000 colleges lease the WebRoomz program, then ask students to fill out computer questionnaires about the hours they sleep, the music they listen to and how warm or cold they like their rooms.

Each student's responses are logged into the WebRoomz program with an on-line name.

Those searching for roommates browse through the responses looking for the perfect match. Just to be sure, they can talk \_ via computer, telephone or in person.

Online names protect their privacy and reduce the risk of hurt feelings. Students don't have to reveal their identities until they agree to become roommates.

"It gives the students the freedom to choose," says Sarah Nikirk, associate director of auxiliary services at the University of Kentucky, which is just beginning to add the program.

"They're in the driver's seat."

WebRoomz claims the program cuts down on the number of students who ask for room changes. But officials from several schools say it's too early to tell.

That's not the main reason

schools use it, anyway.

"It has to do with student satisfaction," says John Campbell, director of housing and residence life at UNC Greensboro, which just began implementing WebRoomz.

"It gives the students a little more sense of control."

Most schools in the Carolinas still match roommates the old-fashioned way. Students fill out questionnaires and workers match them \_ by hand, in many cases.

There are dozens of variations.

UNC Charlotte, for example, asks five questions, three about smoking:

- 1) Are you a smoker?
- 2) Do you object to smoking?
- 3) Do you prefer a nonsmoking roommate?

The school also asks students if they have a preferred roommate or want to live in special housing \_ the honors dorm, for example, or Greek housing.

At the other end of the spectrum is Davidson College. The private school north of Charlotte bases roommate pairings on the Myers-Briggs personality inventory along with a list of lifestyle questions (Do you study with music?) and information on students' hobbies and family living

situations.

"We try not to put a member of the Brady Bunch with the only child of a single mother," says Leslie Marsicano, Davidson's director of residence life.

The system works, Marsicano says. Only four of 470 freshmen asked for room changes last year.

"When my colleagues tease me, I just remind them that we don't have the level of requests to make switches that they do at their campuses."

Students say they can't imag-

ine any method working perfectly all the time.

"You really don't know people until you live with them," says Raechelle Berry, 19, a sophomore social work major at UNC Charlotte.

Her freshman roommate experience was, in her words, horrible. She ended up spending much of her time with her boyfriend, Larry Owens.

His freshman roommate moved out after the two exchanged words.

## Tom Rigney and Flambeau To Conclude Concert Series

By Carol Palinkas  
Staff Writer

The summer-long concert series at Cal State Hayward's Contra Costa Campus is coming to an end, with the final concert featuring Tom Rigney and Flambeau to be held Saturday, Oct. 11.

Tom Rigney and Flambeau were invited back after last year's highly popular concert.

"We invited him back because he was so popular and so wonderful," said Barbara Hudler, community outreach coordinator for the Contra Costa Campus.

The band's music is based on Latin roots with Cajun influence. Rigney plays Cajun fiddle.

Hudler said that between 600 and 800 people are expected to attend. Plenty of parking will be available.

Hamburgers, chicken and other grilled food will be available for purchase, as well as beverages.

Hudler said that visitors should dress warmly and bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on.

Gates open at 6 p.m. and the concert begins at 7 p.m.

The Contra Costa Campus is located at 4700 Ygnacio Valley Road, Concord. Additional directions can be obtained by calling (925) 602-6700 or visiting the Web site at [www.concertinthehills.com](http://www.concertinthehills.com).

## 'Trojan Women' Opens Friday

From Staff Reports

Euripides' "Trojan Women" will open Friday in the Cal State Hayward Studio Theatre. Directed by Dawn Monique Williams, the play is a powerful statement on the brutality of war, particularly its impact on the inno-

cents, like the non-combatant protagonists of this classic work. Performances will be Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 5, at 2 p.m. and Oct. 11 at 2 p.m. as part of Hayward's Greek Festival in downtown's Centennial Hall.

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