



THE HARBINGER

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►written by Chloe Stradinger

Roommate horror stories haunt movies, websites and Tumblr pages. But the Facebook generation needn't fear; there's an app for that.

With 96 percent of college students having Facebook accounts and over half of them logging in everyday, universities and students are utilizing social media to connect students. Universities are creating Facebook pages for incoming classes, and Facebook-linked matching systems, namely Roomsurf and RoomSync, are growing in users.

Since its first client in 2009, the Facebook app RoomSync has acquired partnerships with over 40 colleges and universities. Co-founder Rob Castellucci noticed student's affinity for connecting through Facebook after its 2004 creation. As a junior at the University of Florida in 2007, Castellucci worked as an employee matching roommates at a student housing and apartment complex. He'd receive phone calls from clients who wanted to switch after looking up their match on Facebook.

"[My co-founders and I] realized that Facebook was really already a part of the matching process for all these students and all these universities, so we decided 'let's just make it official, let's put Facebook actually into the matching process rather than it being a knee-jerk reaction to the matching process,'" Castellucci said.

Enter RoomSync. After placing a housing deposit, students gain access to their school's network (if they have one), where they then create a profile and place themselves on spectrums of messiness, social/academic focus and bedtime.

Roomsurf, a similar site to RoomSync created in 2010, is available to more people because it allows students to directly create an account instead of going through a school. Both sites allow users to find students with similar profiles, directly message each other, go to Facebook profiles and post on the group wall.

According to Castellucci, one of the biggest advantages of the RoomSync app is the ability to specifically search for interests across users' profiles.

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SURFING FOR A MATCH

AN INCREASING NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ARE FINDING THEIR COLLEGE ROOMMATES THROUGH FACEBOOK



John Thomas Kansas

SLEEPING HABITS: Normal

AVERAGE BEDTIME: 11:30

CLEANLINESS: Average

EATING HABITS: Normal



►art by Andrew McKittrick

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Facebook apps and pages allow students to connect before they get on campus

►continued from cover ►written by Chloe Stradinger ►photo illustration by Caroline Creidenberg

Avid Harry Potter readers can quickly search to find students who have a similar profile and also enjoy the series (if they made the information publicly available on Facebook) instead of visiting each user’s Facebook profile. Roomsurf co-founder Justin Gaither believes that the series of in-depth questions and the matching system that allow the user to weigh the importance of each question on user’s profiles are two of its best features.

The profiles can be an accurate representation of someone’s personality. A recent study by researchers at the University of Maryland predicted a person’s score on a personality test to within 10 percentage points just by using words posted on Facebook.

East alum and University of Southern California freshman Danielle Norton, who found her first semester roommate through Roomsurf, used profile matching to identify potential roommates but made her selection off of conversation. Wanting to find someone she hadn’t met before, she created an in-depth profile and messaged over 20 girls.

“You can’t judge them based off of image,” Norton said. “You have to judge them based off of conversation because I talked to a few girls that are probably the two meanest girls in the freshmen class, and I couldn’t really tell by their Facebook, but I could tell when I started talking to them.”

Norton eventually found Haley, whose reserved manner and computer science gaming engineer major complemented Norton’s outgoing personality and business major.

Castellucci believes that everybody looks for something different in a roommate and sees the advantage social media has in letting students choose what works for them.

“It’s not that we’re doing the matching – that’s never re-

ally been the goal for us, but it’s been ‘let’s build an engaging environment where students feel safe and comfortable to match themselves,’” Castellucci said. “And we give them all the tools and resources to do that.”

A 2011 study at Michigan State University identified roommate conflict as one of the top five reasons students leave universities. Thus both students and universities could potentially benefit from good roommate situations, and RoomSync and Roomsurf hope to be the tools to help.

“I think anything that helps student engage with one another and creates community can lead to increased student retention, and Roomsurf certainly supports that,” Gaither said.

Like Roomsync and Roomsurf, universities don’t have any official gauge to measure how successful social media has been with connecting students.

East alumna and sophomore at Texas Christian University (TCU), Maggie Simmons, used a TCU class Facebook page to find her roommate. Simmons’ freshman roommate Kaitie from Los Angeles, California, saw that she and Simmons had a mutual friend from Kansas City and decided to message her.

After searching Kaitie’s facebook profile, looking at pictures and statuses, Simmons discovered the two had similar interests – music, art, and Christian camps. They decided to room together, and it turned out to be a good match.

“I think that 7 or 8 times out of 10 [Facebook profiles] will be fairly accurate,” Simmons said. “Several people in my hall had a similar situation and if they didn’t end up being good friends with their roommate in the end, they weren’t on bad terms, they just wouldn’t hang out with them a whole lot.”

University-created Facebook pages like the one Simmons used can help students make more connections than just in a roommate. University of Kansas (KU) admissions representative for the Shawnee Mission School District Annie Frizzell has seen a positive response from students in regards to social media.

“We’ve really seen students jump at the chance to connect with each other, especially through our ‘KU Class of’ Facebook pages,” Frizzell said. “Current high school seniors are using facebook.com/ku2017 to find roommates, get in touch with other students who will be at their orientation session, ask questions about what to do next, and connect with other students in their intended major.”

Not everyone is convinced of social media’s power — some students, like senior and future freshman at KU, Mary Sniezek, decide to go “potluck,” or let the school assign them a roommate. Sniezek tried chatting people she found on the KU’s Facebook page, but didn’t find it helpful.

“I wasn’t into meeting people ahead of time because I tried talking to a few people but it was very awkward...it was like an interview,” Sniezek said.

Though it may not be for everyone, Facebook can be useful to students, like senior and future University of Arizona freshmen Halle O’Neill, who otherwise wouldn’t know anyone in the freshmen class.

“Connecting over social media may seem ridiculous, but it’s the closest thing we’ll have to meeting with a roommate,” O’Neill said.

Facebook is helping students get connected and stay connected – Simmons and her old roommate, Kaitie, just had a dinner date last week.

WEBSITES THAT MAKE THE COLLEGE PROCESS EASIER according to The Harbinger staff

(scale) | worth looking at | time saver | life saver

COLLEGE PROWLER

This website is by the students at the college you are interested in. They are surveyed to give you a student perspective on the college. On this website you can research and compare, read student reviews, and find scholarships.

CAPPEX

Cappex has profiles of colleges as well as reviews. It has a college match tool, “What Are My Chances Calculator” and an Ultimate Scholarship Matching Tool.

COLLEGE NAVIGATOR

College navigator gives you a list of things you are looking at in a college and to build a criteria. It gives you a list of schools that meet this criteria and you can create a spreadsheet of the schools you like.