



## **Web site gives students way to find roomies WKU taking advantage of service to help match compatible residents**

It was an all-too-common situation for Kit Tolbert.

After sending out the roommate assignments for Western Kentucky University students, the director of housing operations would begin receiving calls, saying "I looked this person up on Facebook and there's no way we can live together."

But a new roommate matching program may just alleviate that problem.

In March, the university launched a Web-based roommate selection program through **Lifetopia** that allows students to create a profile page and fill out a survey to select a roommate based on compatibility. Tolbert said the program was only open this year for incoming freshmen, but is anticipated to expand to all students next year.

During its launch, Tolbert said 397 students created profiles at <http://wku.roommateclick.com> after receiving instructions and log-in information in the mail. Of those, 72 matches were created for the upcoming fall semester.

"The part I like about it is it puts some responsibility and control in the students' hands," Tolbert said.

"Because of programs like eHarmony and other programs they have heard about, they are familiar with the concept and it was not a strange thing for them to hear about it."

Prior to the system, the housing department would pair roommates based on preferences such as bed time, music choice and which schools they would be attending, and would "match the best we can."

But the profiles allow students to express themselves and have a better sense of who they would want to room with, Tolbert said.

"In the fall, they will feel like they already know the person instead of walking into the room with a complete stranger," she said.

Like many match sites, the contact is made through e-mail, and phone numbers can be exchanged at the students' own discretion. **Lifetopia** was started in 1995 and serves businesses and students in France, Germany, Australia and China. Other universities using the service include DePaul, Southeast Missouri State and Boise State.

Bonnie Poindexter, spokeswoman for **Lifetopia**, said the program allows students to not only pick their roommates for the upcoming semester, but also helps freshmen meet other students entering the school for the first time.

"It's really how people are meeting today anyway," she said about the semi-social network, now operating on more than 20 campuses. "It lets them develop a sense of community with a number of students before they even get to campus, especially when they're coming from another state."

Tolbert said she thinks the program will continue to grow as word of mouth spreads and more students are exposed to it.

"This empowers the student to make decisions and this is an important one to make," she said. "Any power or input they can have, the better."