

WebDorm' helps students partake in 'See-Me' side of college life

By Christine Tatum
College Press Exchange

CHICAGO (CPX) - The views in this dorm room are anything but interesting.

Just ask the guy who lives here. He'll be the first to tell you there's not a whole lot to look at, unless you're really into watching someone sit and type and sit and type some more. Oh, yeah, and maybe strum a guitar every now and then or chat with friends.

Welcome to WebDorm.com, an Internet site where the most mundane aspects of student life are entertainment. Brought to the world by a start-up company based in Boston called College Web Inc., the site allows viewers to peek into the rooms of college students scattered across the country. The project launched Feb. 1, featuring eight students who purportedly attend Bentley and Trinity colleges, Brandeis and Cornell universities, the University of Vermont, The State University of New York at Albany and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. A "Great Lakes" version is expected to debut Feb. 8 with students from Albion College and Bradley, Eastern Michigan, Illinois State and Oakland

universities. Company reps say they eventually want everyone to see the private lives of students in the South and West as well.

"It doesn't interest me in the slightest," said Kerin Black, 21, a student at the Royal Academy of Music in London. "My life is too busy to watch what other people do at home." Or don't do. During the site's first week online, daytime viewers were hard pressed to find any of the students, who have assumed aliases and are generally referred to as "Web Dormers", in their rooms. To give voyeurs something to look at, the students trained their cameras' lenses on piles of clothes, messy desks, and, in one case, a white wall.

Believe it or not, that's the beauty of it all, said Allison Mahoney, marketing manager for College Web. People who want to know more about what college is really like, particularly high school students, can get a better idea by checking out the new site, where Web Dormers "chat" with viewers on a regular basis and post journal entries about their ups and downs. ("I got back with my girlfriend. Hopefully it will work out this time," one entry from a Web Dormer calling himself "Dog Boy" states.)

And if that's not enough, visitors to the site can learn from each other by participating in chats that are available even when none of the students' on-camera lives are home. Mahoney said WebDormers, like, for example, an excerpt from one recent online conversation: User 1: Man, the camera doesn't work. Crappy image on here. User 2: What happened to the camera? User 3: Where is the picture? User 4: What are the pictures?

Other chats during the first week included a many uses of the F word and sexually suggestive comments to the people appearing on camera, particularly women. One College Web posted a statement warning that "lewd, crass, obscene, inconsiderate and harassing behavior is not tolerated and is noticed and logged at all times." The effort didn't seem to deter one visitor, who tried to lure a young woman seen in a Web Dormer's room into an online chat.

"Who is the babe at (her) computer?" the visitor asked. "She is a beautiful baby. Somebody get her on here. Hey... get her on here. Can you hear me, you beautiful baby? If you can hear me, turn the brightness down because I can't see your beautiful baby face. Are you reading

this, you beautiful baby?"

DormWeb is roughly the equivalent of looking online at an endless photo album. Images from Web Dormer's rooms don't come with sound and are updated every 30 seconds with help from a small camera that can be positioned anywhere or turned off anytime. A poster slapped across the door of each Web Dormer's room warns visitors that they will be on camera once they enter. Why would anyone subject themselves or their buddies to such scrutiny?

"I really like being known and getting to know other really nice, intelligent people," said one Web Dormer from Brandeis who is using the alias "Smoot." "I didn't think this would negatively impact me or my friends because I have discretionary control over what I'm going to let the camera see. And I'm not going to be getting dressed in front of it or naked in front of it. And there will be no major displays of affection. If don't want people to see something, I can point the camera at my books or some stationary, picturesque point in my room."

So, what does that mean for people who are trying to see what college is really like?

"Well, they don't have to see

everything," Smoot said. There is, however, nothing that really stops Web Dormers from sharing their most intimate moments with the world. And partying on camera, even if it includes underage drinking and a little hanky-panky, is permissible, Mahoney said.

"We want this to be realistic," she said. "And we're actually not a large enough staff to constantly have people watching the images. We have no way of controlling that."

"They've all (Web Dormers) signed an agreement that states we don't want them doing anything illegal," she added.

That's not enough consolation for some university officials, who are still trying to make sense of the new site and address some of the privacy and protocol issues that WebDorm.com's cameras already have raised. Officials at many of the schools say College Web never sought permission to put cameras in students' rooms.

"The university is breaking new ground with this," said Dennis Nealon, a spokesman for Brandeis. "This isn't someone's home, this is a dorm room, and there are obvious issues that come into play when someone opens up a residence hall for all the world to see when the

university spends a lot of its energy and resources to keep those places as private as possible.

"This is not a good or bad thing right now," he continued. "But it is certainly something that's new and needs to be explored very carefully." If universities step in to censor the Webcasts, this site and others like it are doomed, students from around the world who responded to an informal survey said.

"I don't think I would be interested in watching 'appropriate' dorm life," said Krista Vick, 20, a student at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, Canada. "Nowadays people love just seeing other real people and knowing their stories. But should we (look)? Well, that's a moral choice." Many students agreed that they would much rather watch than be watched.

"I just happen to consider privacy one of the sweetest treasures in life, especially in a dorm where everyone knows everyone's business," said Amber Watts, 20, a student at the University of Redlands in California. "Besides, I don't want my parents knowing everything I do."

Working 9 to 5 is an education itself

By James A. Fussell
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

College is great. You get to hang out with your friends, determine your own schedule and sleep late if you want. It's different when you get your first full-time job.

You might have to move away from friends. And forget sleeping in. You have to get up and go to work. Making this transition from school to work involves many new experiences. Some (your first real paycheck) are easier to handle than others (a scary new work environment).

"A lot of people think it's over when the job offer has been made," said Gloria Campbell, director of career counseling at Johnson County (Kan.) Community College. "But really, it's only starting. It's the beginning of their professional career."

And there is a transition to be made.

Just ask Adrienne Miskell, a newly hired computer programmer with the Cerber Corp. in Kansas City, Mo. Miskell, 23, graduated in December from the University of Northern Iowa and started at Cerber a week later.

At first she was nervous. After she went through orientation her head was so clogged with confusing health plans and benefit options she felt clueless. The switch from school to work was eased by a friend on the inside. She joined Cerber at the urging of one of her northern Iowa friends, Michael D.W. Gabriel, who also works at the company. Still adjusting to full-time work is difficult.

"In college you basically got spoon-fed all the information you needed," Miskell said. "Here they expect you to go find it." But there are a lot of good things about her new job, too. Money, for one. "Now I can actually have a budget and buy things," she

said.

Say, there's some difference from college. "The bill," she said. "There's more of them... And in college when you get a paycheck, it was easy just to go in and blow it. Now I have to say, 'OK, this paycheck's for rent, this one's for my car note...'"

Another adjustment she's faced, having to go to bed late (a part of a responsible adult). Now I know why my mom was so mad when she got home from work. "Such discoveries are common, said Lisa Favara Smith, director of the business and engineering career services partnership at the University of Kansas.

"I truly believe each worker should have no clue what they're getting into," she said. "They are prepared in the university level, but the world of work is completely different. In the

real world they have to be more accountable for themselves; they have to be more self-directed. And they don't know how to do that a lot of times. I didn't. It was baptism by fire."

For students at the University of Kansas, there is a way to ease the transition from school to work. Hawk Talk, a networking program offered by the KU Alumni Association, connects alumni mentors to KU students who belong to the association. The program helps students get advice or shadow a mentor at work. This spring the association also will offer all students its "Success Seminar." Topics include how to use your first paycheck, how to pay off student loans and credit card bills, as well as interview and resume tips.

Amy Sullivan, a benefits and compensation specialist at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, had no trouble landing her first job. Still

she felt overwhelmed after she started last August.

"In school when you get thrown a lot of information, you always have a book or your notes to go back to," she said. "(At work) you don't want to keep asking people 'How do I do this?' So a lot of things you just learn by yourself through trial and error." She eased the transition by talking to her family and to other friends who have similar jobs. "I think the hardest thing (about making the transition from school to work) is just figuring out what you want to do," she said. "And you don't know until you try it out."

For Wendy Platte, a 23-year-old product analyst who joined Sprint in August, the transition often was confusing, especially when it came to learning the jargon of her new job. "Sprint is famous for all their acronyms for their technology," the

Pittsburg State grad said. "In meetings every other word was an acronym. I'd write down every one I didn't know. ... I'd probably come out of a meeting with 10 or 15 terms. It felt like I was in a haze for about a week."

Luckily Karen Knox, another product analyst who had joined the company three months earlier, took it upon herself to help Platte. "Whenever she was involved in a meeting on a conference call, she would have me come along with her," Platte said. "When she was running reports, she would let me sit by her and watch what she was doing and explain as she was going along."

It really helped. Her advice to new workers? "I would just keep an open mind and ask a lot of questions," she said. "And don't be afraid of asking those questions."

Good samaritans offer help to students stiffed on scholarships

College Press Exchange

CHICAGO (CPX) - Good Samaritans throughout the United States are coming to the rescue of college students who were duped into believing they had won \$10,000 scholarships renewable for four years from Houston-based AdamsVision USA.

From coast to coast, individuals, corporations, colleges and universities are trying to help 51 students who were gypped out of their scholarships when AdamsVision told them it didn't have the money to pick up their tuition costs. Last year, the company promised scholarships to one student in every state and Washington D.C.

The company's failure to pay up was a hard blow for the winners, many of whom were National Merit Scholars who graduated first in their class and had at least a 3.0 grade-point average and combined SAT score of 1,160 and above. Given the assurance of having the money, many winners chose to attend some of the nation's most expensive schools, institutions whose tuition their parents cannot afford to pay.

AdamsVision owner Val Adams, who has been convicted in the past of writing bad checks, is quick to point out that no application fees were ever required from students or their parents, a claim that has been confirmed. But that hasn't stopped many contest participants from looking for attorneys. A complaint against the company already has been filed with the Texas attorney general's office.

After reading about the scholarship

screw-up, people across the country decided to help. An Alaska woman gave \$1,000 to the winning student from her state. A Hawaii businessman gave \$1,300 to another winner who attends the same college the man's daughter graduated from posthumously. A woman who lives near Duke University in North Carolina has offered housing to yet another student winner, and Seattle-based Microworkz Computer Corp. has offered personal computers to each of the 51 students. In Texas, Gov. Dolph Briscoe and H-E-B Grocery Co. each have pledged to pay the \$40,000 scholarship guaranteed to Justin Burt, a freshman at Notre Dame. Montana recipient Kendra Young is getting help from her school, Grinnell College in Iowa, which has contributed a \$7,500 grant toward this year's expenses and hopes to provide additional money over the next few years. And Long Island University's C.W. Post campus has offered to match the scholarship award for any student who transfers there.

Despite the gifts, many students say they're not sure they can remain at the schools they've chosen to attend. Melissa Bowlin of Alaska, who received the \$1,000 anonymous donation toward her \$30,000-a-year tuition at Cornell University, said she's grateful for the help she's received, but convinced it's not enough to keep her where she is. "We're doing everything we can to keep me here," she told the Associated Press. "But I can only earn so much, and my parents can only save so much."

'Orangeburg Massacre' monument marks struggle for equality

Knight-Ridder Newspapers

On the campus of South Carolina State University in Orangeburg sits a sturdy, two-story brick building named in honor of three students who lost their lives in the struggle for equality. The Orangeburg community will never forget the tragic night of Feb. 8, 1968.

Incidents leading up to what is now known as the "Orangeburg Massacre" involved college students from South Carolina State College and the neighboring Claflin College. Recorded stories say the origin was at the local white-owned bowling alley where the owner had not complied with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Several attempts were made to

Police say community college student admits sex with 13-year-old girl

College Press Exchange

AUBURN, N.Y. (CPX) - Police said a 19-year-old Cayuga Community College art student has given a statement admitting he had sex with a 13-year-old girl in a room on campus. James Judware was arraigned Feb. 16 on charges of rape, sodomy and endangering the welfare of a child. He did not enter a plea in court and is free on \$5,000 bail.

College officials immediately suspended Judware after police arrested him at the college around 8:30 p.m. on Monday. According to police reports, Judware and the girl met in the college cafeteria where she

was with her 3-year-old brother. The children had gone to a 6 p.m. church meeting at the college with their mother and stepfather.

Police said Judware told them he struck up a conversation with the girl after mistaking her for a college student he knew. After talking for several minutes, Judware said he took the girl and her brother for a walk. Judware told police he was misled into believing that the girl was a college student. However, the girl said she told Judware the truth when he asked her age and where she was from, police said.

In her statement to police, the girl said she willingly drank a vodka and

negotiations with city administrators and campus presidents were held, and student leaders drew up a list of grievances for city officials. By Feb. 8, a large group of highway patrolmen, police and the National Guard had sealed off the college campuses and streets surrounding the schools. Students became angry about the action and with tensions from both sides mounting, a series of unplanned events occurred during the night which led to gunfire from troops. After the gunfire ceased and the injury of several students, the Orangeburg community learned of the deaths of South Carolina State students Samuel Hammond and Henry Smith along with Delano Middleton, a local high school student.

At a memorial service on February 9, 1969, a \$1.4 million dollar health and physical education building at South Carolina State was dedicated to Smith, Hammond and Middleton. The events that unfolded during the "Orangeburg Massacre" are still controversial to this day, with some saying police fired in self-defense. After the unfortunate incident, the Department of Justice filed suit against the owner of the bowling alley. Today, the bowling alley is owned by the same family and is open to all, with students from both colleges utilizing the facility.

Former student in hot water for overdue library books

College Press Exchange

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, ILL. (CPX) A former student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been sentenced to two years of court supervision for failing to return about 180 overdue library books.

Deputy university librarian Frances O'Brien said Sean Harte ignored repeated letters and phone calls requesting the books' return for more than a year. Police finally seized the books from Harte's home last year, and Harte pleaded guilty to misdemeanor theft.

Harte, 32, was a political science graduate student when he racked up \$13,600 in fines and replacement costs during the 1996-97 school year.