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## **Notre Dame MBA Dives into Facebook, Helping Admitted Students Take Big Jump of Their Own**

Most business schools have started to dip their toes into the waters of Facebook, creating Class of 2012 groups for incoming first-year students. The Notre Dame MBA program at the Mendoza School of Business, however, wanted to make a splash. It partnered with Varsity Outreach to create a dedicated community inside Facebook, which included an exclusive, walled-off area only for admitted students.

“We had previously used Facebook groups and they worked fairly well for sharing information, but didn’t allow students to search for group members based on common interests,” said Brian Lohr, director of MBA Admissions at the University of Notre Dame.

“At Notre Dame, community and relationships are very important to us. That’s why we keep our class sizes small and really focus on creating a family feel throughout the program. We felt like the dedicated Facebook app was a unique opportunity for us to establish the sense of community even earlier in the admissions process.”

The Facebook community not only helped admitted students build a stronger connection with the Mendoza School of Business, it encouraged these students to begin forming relationships before they set foot on the University of Notre Dame’s campus. Community members set up several get-togethers in New York and Washington, D.C. They organized carpools to the Welcome Weekend, and shared tips about housing near campus and schools for their kids.

But the activity that likely benefitted most from the Notre Dame MBA’s Facebook application was considerably less routine: A group skydive, organized by an incoming student Conor Evans. The jump took place on Aug. 8 before classes started and included 18 jumpers. The students followed up the dive with a celebratory barbecue attended by 70 people – more than half the incoming class of 134 students.

“The pre-orientation week skydive and the BBQ which followed created a situation where classmates bonded by sharing a common experience outside of their comfort zones. What better way to initiate conversation than to talk about such a thrilling experience!” said first-year Notre Dame MBA candidate Conor Evans.

The Facebook application allowed for the creation and coordination of live events like the skydive and the barbecue, but according to Evans it also served a higher purpose. “The Facebook app allowed the Notre Dame MBA Class of 2012 to actively look for the best in their incoming classmates prior to the start of the semester and lay the foundations for what are already becoming lifelong friendships,” said Evans.

Ultimately, nearly 80 percent of the incoming one-year and two-year MBA students joined the Notre Dame MBA community, and community members checked back into the application more than 33 times on average. Notre Dame's undergraduate program launched its own community in August.

"Our incoming class really embraced the app and the results were obvious on the first day of Orientation. It was less like an introduction and more like a reunion of old friends" said Lohr.

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**About Varsity Outreach**

Varsity Outreach (<http://www.varsityoutreach.com>) creates customized Facebook Applications for undergraduate and graduate institutions. We help schools tap into the power of social networking to develop stronger relationships with prospective and admitted students. We currently work with more than 30 undergraduate and graduate institutions.

**About the Notre Dame MBA Program**

The Notre Dame MBA at the Mendoza College of Business enrolls approximately 340 students annually in its one-year and two-year programs. The program is designed to sharpen students' analytical and problem-solving skills, enhance their leadership ability and increase emphasis on ethical decision making. Students have the opportunity to study the complexities of global business through international immersions in Asia, Latin America and other locations.

During the week-long Interterm Intensives, the MBA students analyze, investigate and offer solutions for real-life problems presented by executives from large global organizations. The Notre Dame MBA is ranked 20th among U.S. business schools by BusinessWeek, and No. 5 in the Aspen Institute's 2009-10 Beyond Grey Pinstripes, a biennial survey and alternate ranking that indicates the school's success in integrating social, environmental and ethical issues into its program.

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