

# The Bulletin

## Roommates Reflect on Random Placement

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An absurd amount of pressure can be placed on the success of a roommate placement, when the reality of its success seems to be hard to predict. For many college students, their roommate is a big part of their college experience, and for many college first-years, finding the right roommate feels like a critical step to starting college off right.

There are two main roommate options when you first live on campus at Oberlin College: you can ask to be randomly assigned to another student, or you can request to room with someone you already know. The decision seems like a big one, but there is no way to guarantee the success of either choice. From what I've seen, it seems like there is an equal chance of the roommate pair matching, whether you go random or you scout through the Oberlin decision Instagram page. While there is a particular risk and uncertainty to requesting a random roommate, there is a certain wonderful and unexpected friendship that can come of it.

College fourth-years Fairlyn Decker and Derya Taspinar were first-years when they met in 2021. They were a random pair and had only called once before meeting.

"The first time we FaceTimed, it just happened to go on for three hours ... we had so much to talk about," Fairlyn said when recounting her first impressions of Derya. "I felt like we immediately clicked."

Fairlyn is from Tulsa, OK, and Derya is from Maryland, near the Washington, D.C. area. They are both Psychology ma-

jors. While speaking with Derya and Fairlyn, it was clear that they were a great match. They smile together, they talk in a similar way, and they laugh at the same time. It comes as no surprise that they would get along.

"First of all, we kind of look a little bit similar," Derya said, as they looked at each other and laughed.

Derya shared that she was happy and relieved to be getting along with Fairlyn from the start. Her mom had become good friends with her freshman roommate in college, and Derya had wished for a similar experience with hers. More important than their fast connection is the friendship that they have cultivated over the last four years.

"You know, we were obviously friends the first semester, but I feel like we really clicked more the second semester," Derya said. "That's when we actually became, probably, best friends."

The two have chosen to live together all four years of their time at Oberlin. They both agreed that

they didn't exactly know they would stay roommates after their first year, but it worked out because of how well they lived together.

"We are great at living together because we're very open with each other: I like talking to her," Fairlyn said. "We just said, 'Let's do it again!' And it just kept happening."

They now live off-campus in a small house decorated with fairy lights, throw pillows, and their third roommate's paintings. Through their friendship and partnership, they have created a home for themselves in Oberlin. Derya and Fairlyn shared that as they continued living together, they only got better at communicating and closer as friends.

Tilly Smith and Sarah Suh are College first-years. The two of them met in August 2024 when they were paired randomly as roommates. Tilly is from San Francisco and Sarah is from New York City. Tilly is a prospective Cinema and Media major and Sarah is a prospective Neuroscience major. Tilly's favorite colors are electric blue, pink, and red. Sarah's is black. They are a perfect example of opposites, paired randomly, that get to be friends.

When they first met, they didn't instantly click, but still got along very well.

"I wasn't like, 'This is my twin,'" Tilly said, but she wasn't worried. Sarah agreed, saying she knew

things would be fine. They set up the room together and spent a lot of time hanging out during their first week. They bonded over long walks and attended orientation events together.

Now, Tilly says they have a great system going. Their routines work together and without hesitation, Tilly and Sarah consider each other great friends. If they hadn't been placed together, they both agree they likely wouldn't have become close, and since their majors have such little overlap, they may have never met.

"I just feel like we're both not super extroverted people, so I don't know if we would have met each other otherwise," Tilly said. "I get nervous around people I think are intimidating."

Sarah is objectively intimidating, and she is flattered by that characterization.

Despite their difference in study, Tilly and Sarah have a lot in common.

"We like a lot of the same movies, and we like a lot of the same music," Tilly said.

Their similarities are ones they likely wouldn't have gotten the chance to explore without rooming together, but their similar interests make their friendship an easy one. They both love Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, Leonard Cohen, and Patti Smith.

What makes the friendship of a roommate unique is that living together forces a kind of closeness and partnership that isn't demanded of other friendships. It requires communication and it cultivates empathy.

You are also forced to exhibit an additional layer of patience with the person you're rooming with. Whether it be patience with their living habits or patience in finding similarities and points of interest, living together creates infinitely more opportunities to get to know each other. While you may have given up on discussing movies and books with a potential friend if you had just overlapped with them in the halls on the way to class, you now have hours and hours to try until you succeed.

And while it is, in essence, out of your hands whether you will get along with a random roommate, all four of these individuals exhibit a level of maturity and self-awareness when navigating their relationships that clearly increases their chances of success.

"I'm like a weed and I can survive with anybody," Tilly said when I asked her if she was concerned about getting along with her potential roommate.

I don't doubt this one bit, but survival is setting the bar pretty low. Both Sarah and Tilly, and Fairlyn and Derya, are happy to call their roommates friends and grateful for the warmth and community that has brought them.



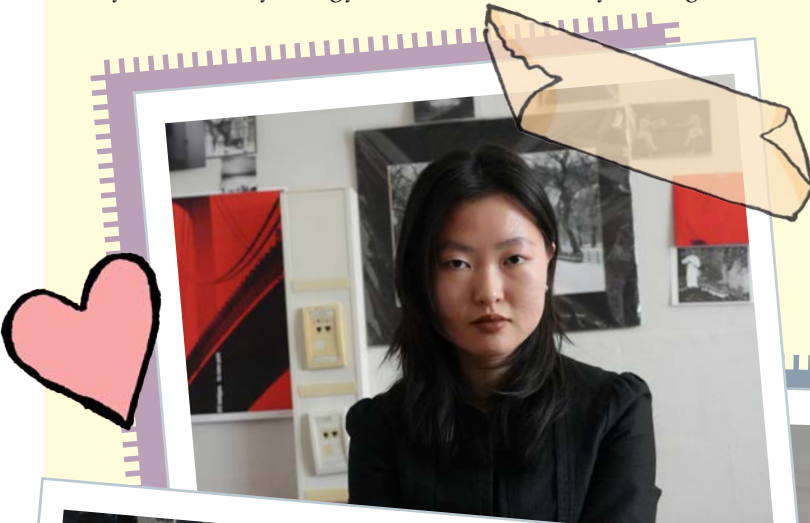
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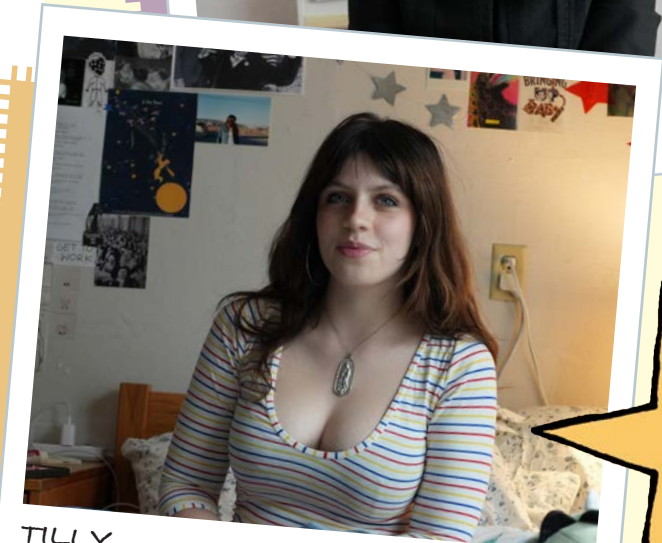
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