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Cool and funtional

By Crystal Boyles
Anderson Independent-Mail
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Imagine the deep restful sleep that only college can give you.

Roll over and whack! You crack your head on your alarm clock, which rests beside your pillow on your bed.

Unfortunately you've got the top bunk in your peanut-sized dorm room, which means your alarm clock can either be on the table beside your roommates' head, or whacking you on the head in the middle of the night.

But alas, merchandisers are picking up on an extremely fast-growing trend called college dorm fashion, which means you no longer have to crack your head or bother your roommate with the alarm.

Bring in the mini mantle. It attaches to your bedpost and has a place for your clock, a groove for your Coke and another groove for your pen.

Available at DormBuys.com, these mantles and other niche dorm items have been flying off the shelves this year, said Jeff Gawronski, college dorm expert from DormBuys.com

Mr. Gawronski has been traveling around the country — including Anderson — looking at college dorm rooms and working on products to help make college student's lives easier.

"If you go into Anderson (University) dorms, they'll have a unique need that other dorms won't have," he said.

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Meeting those students' need has become a booming business for retailers. This year, the average college freshman family is expected to spend \$1,200 on furnishing and decorating the new student's dorm room, according to the National Retail Federation.

At Clemson University, students have been moving in big screen and plasma TVs as well as dorm-specific furniture, which can now be found at many local retailers like Target, IKEA and Bed, Bath & Beyond, said Rose Ellen Davis-Gross, assistant director for marketing and communications.

"It used to be milk crates and cinder blocks and now it's actually furniture," she said. "It amazes me what they can fit into dorm dooms."

Space saver items are a great way to fit all that stuff into those often shoe-box sized dorm rooms you have to share with another person.

Besides shoe racks and bookshelves and drawers, utilize every door in the room, Mr. Gawronski said. Use risers to lift the bed and use the underneath as storage space.

In the closet, or open space disguised as your closet, leave the single hangers at home and buy multi-tiered hangers that hold numerous items. Simple things like that will free up much-needed space, he said.

Instead of a coffee table, get a storage truck or ottoman that you can use as a coffee table or even a stool for visiting friends to sit on, Mr. Gawronski said.

Planning ahead, talking to your roommate and making sure you know the things your school does not allow you to bring are key items to tackle.

Leave the candles and incense at home. Most college, including Anderson University and Clemson University don't allow them.

"Basically, anything you have to light a flame to is not OK," said Melissa Laraway, Anderson University director of residence life.

Leave your pets — other than fish — firearms, toaster ovens and missiles at home, Ms. Laraway and Ms. Davis-Goss both said. Clemson also doesn't allow halogen lamps.

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Even without these things, students can and still will get into the decorating spirit and transform those drab empty rooms into something that reflects their personalities.

"Each room is just so unique when you walk into it," Ms. Laraway said.

And that's the colleges' goal.

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