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ALLEGHENY COLLEGE ★ DENISON UNIVERSITY ★ EARLHAM COLLEGE ★ HIRAM COLLEGE ★ KENYON COLLEGE ★ OBERLIN COLLEGE
★ OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY ★ WABASH COLLEGE ★ WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY ★ COLLEGE OF WOOSTER

NCAC Softball Special

For Immediate Release

**DENISON TABBED PRESEASON FAVORITE IN FIFTH
NORTH COAST SOFTBALL SEASON**

February 27, 2002

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- Defending champion Denison emerged as the preseason favorites in balloting by North Coast Athletic Conference softball coaches in their first-ever preseason poll.

The Big Red, who rolled to a 13-1 conference record and NCAC Championship and Tournament titles last spring, earned two first- and two second-place votes from league coaches for 48 points. 2001 runner-up Wooster also received two first-place and two second-place nods, finishing second with 42 points. Wittenberg, who finished last season in fourth place, was picked third (40), while Ohio Wesleyan and Allegheny (36) share fourth.

Denison is 87-72-1 (.547) since the program began in 1997 and is 79-50-1 (.612) since the NCAC initiated softball as a championship sport with the 1998 season. The Big Red return 15 letterwinners and last year's whole starting lineup, including 2001 North Coast Player and Pitcher of the Year, senior **Courtney Zollars (Westerville, OH/Westerville South)**. Denison will be coached by first-year skipper **Holly Bruder** (Alma '99) who joins the Big Red after a stint as the assistant softball and head women's tennis coach at Bluffton.

Since the North Coast began sponsoring softball as a championship sport, three schools have claimed championships: Allegheny in 1998 and '99, followed by Wittenberg in 2000 and Denison last spring. The NCAC held a softball tournament for the first time in 2001, also won by the Big Red, to help determine the league's automatic qualifier to the NCAA Tournament.

Founded in 1983, the North Coast Athletic Conference consists of 10 academically selective colleges and universities - Allegheny College, Denison University, Earlham College, Hiram College, Kenyon College, Oberlin College, Ohio Wesleyan University, Wabash College, Wittenberg University and the College of Wooster. The NCAC sponsors 22 championship sports, 11 for men and 11 for women.

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2002 NCAC Preseason Softball Poll

First-place votes in parentheses, followed by total points:

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|-------------------------|----|
| 1. Denison (2) | 48 |
| 2. Wooster (2) | 42 |
| 3. Wittenberg (2) | 40 |
| 4. Allegheny (1) | 36 |
| Ohio Wesleyan | 36 |
| 6. Kenyon | 29 |
| 7. Hiram | 12 |
| 8. Oberlin | 9 |