

Published September 8, 2005

3 of 4 NU campuses increase enrollment

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WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN - This year's freshman class at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is 9 percent bigger than last year's, prompting UNL officials to proclaim they've "turned the corner" on an enrollment slide that prompted across-the-board budget cuts last year.

Still, figures released Thursday showed that total enrollment at the Lincoln campus dropped by 117 students compared with last year. At 21,675, enrollment is 0.5 percent smaller than it was in fall 2004.

The Lincoln campus was the only University of Nebraska campus to post an enrollment loss compared with last year.

Total enrollment for the University of Nebraska system grew 0.8 percent, to 45,477.

Enrollment at the University of Nebraska at Kearney grew 1 percent to 6,445, the third straight year of increases for that campus. The campus saw a 28.7 percent increase in graduate students, mostly attributable to growth in online class offerings.

The University of Nebraska Medical Center saw record enrollment, with more than 3,000 students for the first time. It was an increase of 98 students since the fall of 2004.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha saw an increase of 269 students compared with fall 2004, an increase of almost 2 percent.

Nebraska administrators touted the quality of the incoming freshman class, as well as its size.

NU President J.B. Milliken said average ACT scores for freshmen at all three

undergraduate campuses hit all-time highs, ranging from an average of 22.2 at the Kearney campus to 24.9 at UNL. "(It) is one indication that many bright, talented young people are choosing to attend the University of Nebraska," Milliken said.

UNO and UNL also reported increases in the number of minority students. Students from racial and ethnic minorities comprise 9.8 percent of UNL's freshman class, compared with 8.5 percent last year.

UNL Chancellor Harvey Perlman pointed to a bigger freshman class as a sign that the Lincoln campus is on the rebound from last year's 3.4 percent enrollment drop. The campus saw 3,560 first-time freshmen this fall, a 9 percent increase from last year.

In 2004, UNL's freshman enrollment dropped by more than 11 percent, forcing an estimated \$6.2 million in budget cuts.

Perlman said Thursday that he is pleased with campus recruiting efforts.

"We have some work to do in continuing to grow our enrollment, but we're on the right track," Perlman said.

Bill Nunez, UNL's director of institutional research and planning, said the effects of last year's small freshman class will continue to be seen in UNL's enrollment figures for several years.

"But with this year's stellar freshman recruitment, we're at a turning point," he said.

Wade Robinson, UNO associate vice chancellor for student affairs, said campus efforts to keep Nebraska students in Nebraska are paying off. The number of Nebraska residents enrolled at UNO increased by 2.6 percent this year.

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