



UM-Flint enrollment surges more than 5%

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, September 13, 2007

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FLINT - It's like a first down for the University of Michigan-Flint when it comes to the challenge of growing enrollment.

UM-Flint broke an enrollment record this fall with a 5.3 percent increase following years of stubbornly flat numbers, a historical touchstone with spikes in almost every category of students.

After a year of changes around campus, UM-Flint saw a 20 percent increase in freshmen, significant boosts in the international student population and a double-digit hike in graduate students for the third consecutive year.

"On every dimension, the University of Michigan-Flint is moving forward," said interim Chancellor Jack Kay. "Five percent may not seem like a huge amount, but in the college/university enrollment picture, this is a very substantial increase.

"It's hard to get a 1 percent increase."

The university's total fall enrollment of nearly 6,900 students is up from last fall's 6,527 students - a step toward the far-reaching goal to enroll 8,000 students by 2010.

In the year before a roughly 300-bed residence hall opens here, the face of campus also grew in diversity. Most ethnic groups saw increases, with the Asian population up by almost 33 percent, the Hispanics up 24 percent and a 9 percent increase in blacks.

Officials credited aggressive recruiting, dual enrollment additions from the new Genesee Early College and a swelling number of program offerings for the increase.

Other boosters were new events drawing high school students to campus, such as a scholarship competition, and one of the lowest tuition increases among all state public universities.

"This year we marked another important milestone in the 50-year history of UM-Flint," Kay said. "We are already busy recruiting for the fall class of 2008.

"We are driven by a passion for this campus and this community."

Graduate students are one of the fastest-growing sectors of campus, up 13.5

QUICK TAKE

Highlights

Total fall enrollment is up 5.3 percent, from 6,527 to nearly 6,900 students this year.

Freshmen: Up 20 percent

International: Up from nearly 114 students to 151 students

Graduate: Up 13.5 percent. It is the third consecutive double-digit jump that includes a 25 percent increase in international graduate students.

Black: Up 9 percent

Asian: Up 33 percent

Hispanic: Up 24 percent

Online: 16 percent of total enrolled students are completely online students.

percent this year after last year's 23 percent increase and a rise of 32 percent in 2004-05.

For the first time, graduate enrollment exceeded 1,000 with 1,050 students. The school had only 557 graduate students in 2002.

Officials said they did not think the sluggish economy was responsible for the surge of graduate students but rather increased interest in getting ahead at a current job or vying for a new position.

Vahid Lotfi, dean of graduate programs, said UM-Flint has added programs over the years and offers attractive new concentration options in the master's of business administration program and increased flexibility in course scheduling that includes online components.

Recruiting efforts also have been revved in recent years, with more open houses and advertising campaigns.

Lotfi last year was sent to Kuwait, Dubai and India in an attempt to strengthen international partnerships and international recruiting - another area of emphasis.

A new director was hired last year for the International Student Center, while "internationalizing" the campus became a buzz phrase.

Following a national trend, the university again has a female-dominated campus, with 62 percent of students being women, 38 percent men. Genesee County was still the strongest recruiting area with 67 new students, compared to 17 new students from Shiawassee County.

Freshman Karen Ong, 18, of Flint said she thinks whatever the university is doing to promote itself and fight misconceptions, it's working.

"People didn't go here because it was in Flint, and they thought it was in the ghetto," said Ong, a nursing major. "They thought it's not a good place to study. But it's a nice campus, it's close to home, and the teachers are good."

Genesee County, up 67 students; Shiawassee County, up 17 students; and tri-counties (Saginaw, Bay, Midland), up 14 students

62 percent women, 38 percent men

Possible factors

New programs.

Increased flexibility in course scheduling with more online and mixed courses with graduate programs.

Increased focus on international recruiting that includes overseas trips and partnerships.

New events bringing high school students to campus, including a scholarships competition, special Sunday session for financial aid, Super Science Friday and high school forums with nationally renowned speakers, such as journalist Bob Woodward.

The new Genesee Early College that adds roughly 50 students to dual enrollment.

A tuition hike of 6.4 percent that is one of the lowest in the state.

Satisfaction and word of mouth: A national survey found that 85 percent of first-year students reported a favorable image of the university, and 79 percent of seniors said they

would choose
UM-Flint again if they
could start college
over.

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