

Tuition

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there were 13,243 undergraduate students, a number that rose gradually to 16,047 undergraduate students in Fall 2002, a 21 percent increase. The data show a drop in enrolled students from fall to spring term each year, however, with the average difference between the terms fairly constant at about 8 percent.

The difference in enrollment from the beginning to the end of the year may be due to several factors, Director of Admissions Martha Pitts said.

"There are a number of reasons why students stop out in a year, and some are financial reasons," Pitts said. She added some students also graduate in fall and winter or may not be academically eligible to continue.

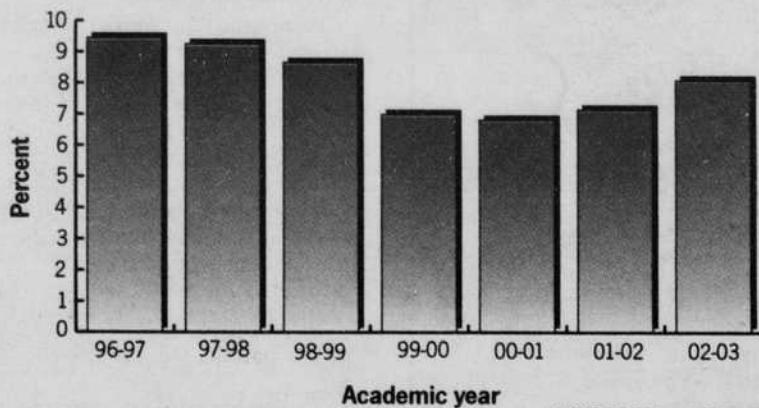
Students may also withdraw from classes because of illness, conflicts with work, family obligations, a transfer to another college or other personal reasons, Director of Academic Advising Hilary Gerdes said.

"One of the most common reasons is that the student just needs a break — needs some time away," she said.

The Office of Academic Advising works only with students who wish to completely withdraw from the University after enrolling for classes. Gerdes said academic advising does not keep track of students who choose not to return after the end of a term or school year. In fall 2002, the department handled 725 withdrawals.

"In fall term, there were approximately 16 percent of the students (who withdrew) who cited financial reasons," Gerdes said. During the entire year, about 13.4 percent of all withdrawn students said they were

PERCENTAGE DECREASE IN UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT FROM FALL TO SPRING



SOURCE: University Registrar
Adelle Lennox Emerald

leaving for financial reasons. That number was 13.3 percent in 2001 and 13 percent in 2000, Gerdes said.

Despite the data on withdrawals, it is difficult to determine whether or not tuition increases reduce enrollment.

"The impact of a tuition increase is hard to gauge in isolation," Pitts said, adding it has to be analyzed in different contexts. She said the argument that some students may not be able to afford education is a valid assumption, but the administration has not been able to quantify how many students have been forced to leave.

"It's quite a complicated economic analysis that has to be done," she said.

Despite the rising costs over the years, applications to the University have risen. Last year, the University received more than 9,900 applications and admitted about 3,250 students. This year, Pitts said the Office of Admissions received more than 10,000 applications, but fewer than 3,000 students were admitted.

"We are purposefully decreasing the freshman class (sizes)," Pitts said, adding that if the student body continued to grow without control, it would put the University beyond its capacity to cater effectively to all its students.

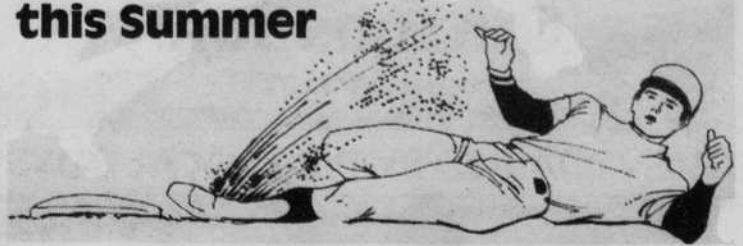
"We want to make sure we provide a quality education," she said.

However, ASUO President Maddy Melton said the debate on tuition is not based only on numbers, but also on access to education. She said increases in tuition rates may affect the composition of students in relation to their income levels and economic class.

"Rise in tuition does not necessarily correlate to a decrease in enrollment when you're looking at numbers," Melton said. "But when you're looking at who is enrolling, there is a demographic change if need-based financial aid does not compensate for those increases."

Contact the reporter at ayishayahya@dailyemerald.com

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