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OCC, OU enroll more students

BY RALPH R. ECITINAW
STAFF WRITER

A dormant economy and allegedly skyrocketing tuitions have apparently not greatly affected enrollment at Oakland Community College and Oakland University.

Both public institutions are packed to capacity in some areas and would consider expansion if financial realities allowed it. Nearby, Lawrence Technological University in Southfield, a private school, is holding its own.

OCC enrollment for the fall semester has hit an all-time high once again at 29,363, up from 26,460 five years ago and 3,860 when the college was founded in 1965.

In terms of enrollment, OCC is the eighth largest community college in the country and the 46th largest when four-year schools are included.

But just as a glass can only hold so much water, OCC will eventually reach a saturation point at which it must either expand or cap enrollment. "That time will occur somewhere down the line, yes," said college spokesman George Cartsonis. "In some ways we reach it with night classes now."

With about 23,000 of its students (many of them working during the day) choosing a part-time education, OCC's night classes are in demand. "This is the trend, more and more for people to prefer night classes," Cartsonis said.

Also, college officials have discussed building a new campus in the vicinity of Novi, Cartsonis said, but with state aid down and the college only raising \$1 million, there's not enough money to do that.

At Oakland University in Auburn Hills, enrollment is 12,665 this year (tentatively) and has fluctuated between that figure and 12,254 since 1987.

Admissions director Jerry Rose said OU could have a lot more students if it wanted to, but there's not enough money to hire the extra teachers that would be needed.

Although OU doesn't have an enrollment cap, per se, admission standards are high enough that not just anyone can get in. For the most part, incoming freshmen must have grade point averages of 3.0 or higher to reasonably expect admission, Rose said. Even so, the 1992 frosh crop (1,220) exceeds last year's total by 18 percent.

The most popular programs at OU are business, communications and health sciences, and "we're having to, in a sense, cap the enrollment in some of those programs now," Rose said.

For example, students who have completed their first two years of study and are trying to get into the nursing program will have to meet higher standards as long as the demand for nursing degrees remains high. "They're going to have to work a lot harder to get in that program," Rose said. "Continued growth would be difficult (for OU) to handle."

Enrollment in Oakland's engineering and education programs also continue to grow, Rose said, but the liberal arts (e.g. English, history, philosophy) are in decline.

Students, Rose said, are looking for degrees that translate into immediate jobs, as opposed to the general education that liberal arts degrees provide. "The job-market concept is their primary reason for being in higher education," Rose said.

At Lawrence Technological University, enrollment has fallen from 5,961 in 1988 to 5,276 today, but nobody's sweating it.

"We're not concerned about it," said spokesman Bruce Annett.

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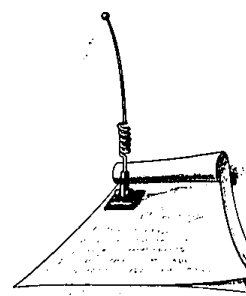


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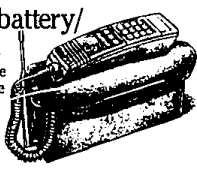
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