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UIS enrollment tops 5,000

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Now that it has crossed the 5,000 threshold in enrollment that includes students taking classes via the Internet, the University of Illinois Springfield would like to see that many attending classes on campus.

"We need to decide how big we want to be," said UIS Chancellor Richard Ringeisen. "Our next goal will probably be to have 5,000 students taking classes on campus and 2,000 living on campus."

UIS enrollment topped 5,000 for the first time this fall with a 4.3 percent increase over last fall's total.

The number of enrolled students this year is 5,174, up 213 students over the 2009 total of 4,961 students. The fall 2010 number includes 1,626 exclusively online students.

"Those are targets that my successor will have to deal with," said Ringeisen, who is retiring Oct. 31. He added that UIS currently doesn't have enough on-campus housing to accommodate 2,000 students.

"When we first added freshmen (in 2001), we geared up for having more students," he said. "We thought we'd make it to 5,000 last year, but this year we blew by it."

"To say we are excited would be an understatement. For our enrollment to surpass 5,000 marks a milestone for us. That number has been an informal goal for quite a number of years, and it shows once again recognition of the high-quality education that UIS provides."

Ringeisen said everyone at UIS has made retention of students a top priority.

"UIS continues to be met with tough economic conditions, but we also continue to provide the highest possible level of educational experience," he said. "We are very pleased."

There are 3,197 undergraduates at UIS this fall, compared to 3,027 last fall semester — a 5.6 percent increase. The number of graduate students climbed to 1,977, up 43 students from last year.

"We continue to grow as a university, and the retention of students is a big part of our success," said Lori Giordano, interim director of admissions.

The number of students living on campus remained the same as last fall, with 1,089 in UIS apartments, townhouses, and Lincoln and Founders residence halls. Ringeisen said the residence halls are almost full.

Online programs continue to grow with a nearly 15 percent increase in the number of credit hours being taken online this semester, said Ray Schroeder, director of the Center for Online Learning, Research, and Service. There are 17,172 online credit hours being taken this fall compared to 14,955 online credit hours last fall.

The number of students majoring in online degree or certificate programs grew by 63 students to a total of 1,364 online majors for a 4.8 percent increase over the previous fall.

"UIS continues to lead the way in online learning," Schroeder said. "Every semester since we began offering online classes a dozen years ago, the number of online credit hours taken by our students has increased."

Overall, more than 55 percent of UIS students — 2,850 total — are taking at least one online class this fall.

Schroeder said that last spring, UIS led all public universities in Illinois in online enrollments for college.

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Enrollment numbers for other area colleges

* Final Lincoln Land Community College enrollment numbers won't be available until next week, but officials there are confident that fall 2010 will top the 7,876 students enrolled last fall.

Fall 2009 enrollment was up almost 18 percent from the previous year. No double-digit increase is expected for 2010, however.

* Fall enrollment is down slightly at the University of Illinois' Urbana campus.

Undergraduate enrollment totaled 31,252 students, down less than 1/10th of 1 percent from a year ago.

Freshman enrollment also is down from 6,991 to 6,936, a decrease of less than 1 percent.

The U of I's Chicago campus reported 16,790 undergraduates, up from 15,964 and a gain of 5.2 percent.

* Enrollment dropped 2.8 percent this fall at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

University officials blame the economy for the drop from 11,966 students a year ago to 11,630 this fall. Enrollment of juniors, seniors and transfer students is higher this fall than last.

* Western Illinois University's fall new freshman, transfer and graduate student enrollments have increased, but total enrollment for the university declined less than 1 percent, mostly due to large graduating classes in May 2009 and May 2010, the university said.

The fall 2010 student headcount of 11,224 at the Macomb campus is down from 11,266 in fall 2009. Including the Quad Cities campus, total enrollment is 12,585, compared to 12,679 last year.

* Southern Illinois University Edwardsville has the largest enrollment in its history.

SIUE's overall enrollment this fall is 14,107, a 1.2 percent increase over last year's 13,941. The new freshman class also is a record, with 2,030 new freshmen, up from 1,940 last year.

* Enrollment is down, however, at SIU-Carbondale.

The 10-day enrollment figures there show just more than 20,000 students are taking classes this semester, down 1.5 percent from last year. The decline comes mostly in the freshman and sophomore classes.

* Overall enrollment at Northern Illinois University is down by 574 students over last year, but NIU leaders said they were encouraged by the number of applications received and the number of students who transferred to the school.

Overall, there are 23,850 students registered at NIU this fall, down from 24,424 students at the same time last year. There are 2,705 new freshmen enrolled at the university this fall, down from 3,033 in 2009.

Transfer student enrollment increased 9.2 percent to 2,294, up from 2,100 last year.

— From staff and wire reports

Cake, prizes for 5,000th student

Josh Nordin thought it was a joke when someone from the University of Illinois Springfield called him to tell him he was the 5,000th student enrolled at the school this fall.

When he realized the call was real, "I felt like going out and buying a lottery ticket," said the 32-year-old junior transfer student from Lincoln Land Community College.

Nordin was feted for being the "magic number" Thursday with cake and cupcakes, all with a blue UIS logo on their white icing.

He also got a sweatshirt, a couple of mugs and a gift card from the UIS bookstore, all courtesy of the Office of Student Affairs, for having his name pop up on the computer.

Nordin works at St. John's Hospital, is a special education attendant at Franklin Middle School and teaches kickboxing.

"Luckily, they work with me on classes," he said. "I love it here so far. The teachers are great. They're down-to-earth and helpful."

His three classes — two online and one on-campus — are all in his major of psychology, but Nordin aspires to become an elementary school teacher.

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