

1 percent enrollment decline affects budget

BY DANA SUHAS
Staff writer

The administration now has the task of using the latest enrollment figures, which show the smallest decline since 1992 to convince the Legislature to maintain the university's funding, President Robert Witt said Thursday.

"Now the thing that it's important to stress is that at the last legislative session at this point and time, we were also down several million dollars," he said. "So our job over the coming months is to work to get that money, one way or the other, put back into our budget."

The university has 593 fewer total semester credit hours this semester than

President Witt to negotiate with Legislature to maintain funding

last spring. As a result, Dr. Witt said the Legislature has designated \$3.1 million less in funds for the university for the next two years.

He said, however, that the Legislature has not yet completed this year's session and that administrators are hopeful that it will designate more funds to the university during the next month or so.

Witt said that last year administrators were able to recover a loss greater than this year's, and they're confident they'll

be able to do that again.

He added that he was pleased with the gains in some of the colleges.

"We were very pleased to see enrollment growth in several of our academic units and anticipate in the fall that nearly all of the academic units will be showing enrollment growth," he said.

The total number of semester credit hours, which includes undergraduate, graduate and doctoral hours, is a factor used to determine the level of funding the

university receives from the Legislature.

Dana Dunn, vice provost for academic affairs and associate vice president for undergraduate academic and student affairs, said that although head count enrollment, or the total number of students enrolled decreased by 1 percent from Spring 1998, the total number of semester credit hours dropped by only .0032 percent. She added that the number of semester credit hours for each college is a more accurate figure in terms of assessing enrollment than the total head count.

"The head count enrollment broken down by colleges depends on the major

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that a student has declared," she said. "Sometimes students are a little slow in making their changes of majors. Sometimes there are delays in processing. Those kinds of things mean these figures may not accurately reflect where our students are concentrated at this very moment."

In the Feb. 17 and 18 issues of The Shorthorn the enrollment stories should have read: The winter session term was attached to the spring semester for registration purposes and the student credit hours generated by winter session are added to those for the spring semester. Students who registered for winter session and the spring semester are not double counted. For the head count purposes, students registered for both winter session and the spring semester count only once. Students from other universities who came to UTA for winter session only, do increase our head count for spring. The overall number of such students, however, is 45 students. Without winter session, the university's head-count enrollment would have been down 1.26 percent, or 17,835 as opposed to the actual 17,880.

Enrollment figures for each of the university's colleges and schools released by administrators Thursday show increases of up to 165 students, and decreases of up to 354 students.

"One of the striking positives is the dramatic increase in enrollment

for Teacher Education," Dunn said. "I think that's not surprising given the demand in the marketplace today for teachers, given the continual improvement in terms of the already outstanding quality of our unit here. You know we've just made the transition to the School of Education. We have a relatively new dean. We've acquired many new and exciting programs in education of late. All of these are part of the momentum I think that's related to this increase in enrollment in this particular area."

Jeanne Gerlach, dean of the School of Teacher Education, said the school keeps communication lines with students open, and that has affected the enrollment increase of 109 students.

"We're really trying to take a look at what student needs are," she said. "We offer classes on the evenings, and we offer them on the weekends."

After the registration period is over, she continues relations with students.

"I have a Student Advisory Council and I meet with them on a monthly basis," she said. "They tell me what it is they like and what they don't like. So I'm able to listen to them and kind of get a sense of who they are and what they're about. I carry that message to the faculty, and we see how we can really help them."

The College of Business Administration enrolled 124 more students this year than last. Dr. Lawrence Schkade, COBA dean said most of the increase was in the Information

Systems Department.

"The growth in Information Systems is bulging," he said. "That department went up 27 percent over the last two years. We are all, the faculty is all, teaching overloads at no extra compensation, I might point out. I am told that other universities are having the same experience, that it's because of all the good jobs in information systems and computer-related positions."

With the Business Building's renovation and new program offerings, Schkade said he expects the growth to continue and perhaps at an even faster rate.

The College of Engineering experienced a gain of 165 students. Lynn Peterson, associate dean of Engineering said the college has taken an active role in trying to schedule classes when students need them, including monitoring the registration process and adding sections of classes when they became full.

The School of Architecture showed a gain of 41 students, and the Graduate School also showed an increase, with 90 more students than last year.

Five schools and colleges saw a decline in head count enrollment. The College of Liberal Arts (133), the School of Nursing (17), the College of Science (354), the School of Social Work (96) and the School of Urban and Public Affairs (23) all experienced declines. The School of Nursing, however, showed an increase of 449 semester credit hours despite having fewer students.

Dr. Dunn said program changes

might have affected those decreases.

"Before I become too alarmed or so forth, I'd want to talk to the deans and the chairs of the programs that have seen these declines and get their interpretation," Dunn said. "Sometimes we make conscious decisions to upgrade programs, move programs, change the way we classify majors, etc. And all those things need to be investigated and understood before we come to any grand interpretations about what this means, if a unit is 'hemorrhaging' in terms of its students. It's not really fair to make those sweeping conclusions at this stage."

Dr. Edward Morton, assistant dean of science for student affairs, said a policy change may help explain why the College of Science experienced a decline of 354 students.

Beginning in the fall, the college's administrators began sending letters to students whose grade averages dropped below a 2.0. Those students were told that they would have to contact the university's Advising Center and get re-assessed. In effect, Morton said, those students, who numbered 114 in the fall, and 139 this semester, are still enrolled at the university, just not in the College of Science.

Morton said that helps explain why the college experienced a head count enrollment decline, but said the policy is necessary for the benefit of the students.

"We felt that it was in the best interest of the students to do so," he said.