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Humanities courses see drop in enrollment

By The Daily Reveille

More students are adopting career-path focused majors like computer science and athletic training, while humanities majors like history are seeing large drops, according to spring enrollment statistics from the Office of Budget and Planning.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences lost 5.5 percent of its enrollment base from last spring, with history having the largest loss, losing 26 percent of its enrollment base, according to the statistics.

Victor Stater, chair of the history department, said a number of reasons contribute to the decrease, including the decline in the number of law school applicants. Stater said law school applicants in the past were usually history majors.

One of the biggest trends Stater said he sees are students who enjoy history classes but are concerned they won't get a job without a career-specific major. Stater said people are still passionate about and enjoy history, but they are too afraid of not getting a job to major in the field they enjoy. He said he understands students' concerns, with the economic climate in the state it is.

Enrollment in the College of Engineering jumped 10 percent from spring 2013 to 2014, with computer science jumping 49 percent, according to the statistics.

Coretta Douglas, undergraduate and instructional coordinator in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, said one of the major reasons for the increase comes from the current generation's massive exposure to computers and technology in general.

Douglas said the job market for computer science graduates has made an enormous rebound after a slump in the early '00s. She said the prevalence of the Internet and handheld devices has further expanded opportunities for computer science graduates.

Everything is managed by computers these days, Douglas said. "The digital world is here."

Kinesiology also grew by almost 10 percent from last spring, with the College of Human Sciences and Education as a whole growing at a more modest 4 percent.

Ray Castle, Athletic Training Program director in the College of Human Sciences and Education, said the dramatic expansion of healthcare in the United States has created a huge demand for the skills kinesiology majors can provide.

Castle said his department is particularly attractive to students because of job flexibility. He said the program offers a lot of hands on experience for the kinds of situations students would encounter in their careers.

"The educational content is very applicable," Castle said.

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