

## Colleges and universities report enrollment gains here Private, state schools note large freshman classes this fall Sept. 25, 2008

By Jeanne Gustafson

Enrollment is up at most Spokane-area colleges and universities, and several are reporting record or near-record freshman classes this fall. Only Eastern Washington University noted flat enrollment numbers, following a dip in enrollment last year.

Gonzaga University has for the second year reported record numbers of freshmen, with 1,103 freshmen, up from 1,031 freshmen in 2007, says university spokesman Pete Tormey.

The school's overall enrollment this fall is 7,229 students, including undergraduate, graduate, and law-school students. Undergraduate enrollment at the Jesuit university this year is 4,515 students, up from 4,377 students last year, Tormey says.

Gonzaga Law School, however, is limiting its enrollment this year, says Earl Martin, its dean. He says the law school has reduced its target enrollment for first-year students to 175, from between 200 and 210 students previously. Over the next four years, that reduction will cut overall enrollment at the law school to about 475 students, from between 550 and 600 students now, he says.

Martin says the law-school facility is crowded when it has more than 500 students, and the school would like to focus on offering a quality law education to fewer students. It has reduced the number of faculty by the equivalent of four full-time positions, and the number of staff members by the equivalent of three full-time positions, and has planned moderate tuition increases over the next few years, he says. Tuition this year rose 2.97 percent at the law school, to \$30,120, for full-time students, he says.

Martin says the law school has been receiving about 13 percent more applications each year, even while applications at law schools nationally are falling.

The school also is in the process of changing its curriculum, and begins a new Indian Law program this fall.

Martin says that with even more resources devoted to fewer graduates, the law school can be more selective about who it admits to the program and will be in a better position to support its students as they graduate and seek employment.

### **EWU**

Eastern Washington University is expecting overall enrollment this year of about the same as last year's 9,841 students, but expects to have its second largest freshman class ever, says university spokesman Dave Meany.

Meany says this fall's enrollment likely will include about 1,500 incoming freshmen, up by about 150 freshmen from last year.

EWU's enrollment fell last year following several years of record enrollment. Meany says the university's focus on outreach and recruiting over the past year has helped it attract more freshmen. He says the number of graduate students is up about 20 percent this year, to 1,084.

EWU is starting a new program in partnership with the University of Washington, called regional initiatives in dental education (RIDE), at the Riverpoint Campus near downtown Spokane. As part of that

program, students from EWU's dental hygiene program and UW's dental school are placed in rural communities for some of their practical work.

### **Whitworth University**

Enrollment at Whitworth University is up 2.5 percent this fall, to 2,674 students, from 2,607 students last year. Altogether, the university has 2,394 undergraduate students and 280 graduate students, up from 2,331 and 276 students, respectively, the year before. This year's enrollment includes 546 freshmen and 92 transfer students.

Whitworth had 5,471 freshman applications this year, but accepts only about 10 percent of them to stay with its strategic-plan undergraduate enrollment growth of about 2 percent, with 5 percent growth in its evening undergraduate and graduate programs, says university spokesman Greg Orwig.

### **WSU-Spokane**

Washington State University at Spokane has enrollment this fall of 1,576 students, an increase of 7.9 percent over last fall. This year's enrollment includes 616 professional and graduate students and 713 undergraduate students. Of the undergraduate students at the campus here, 82 percent are women, and more than 90 percent are full-time students, says spokeswoman Judith Van Dongen.

WSU launched a bachelor's in speech and hearing sciences program this fall. In that program, students enroll as juniors after completing lower level coursework elsewhere, Van Dongen says.

### **Community colleges**

Preliminary enrollment figures for the Community Colleges of Spokane show an increase of 904 students this year, to 15,167 students enrolled. CCS spokeswoman Mary Harnetiaux says those enrollment figures won't be final until October.

The community college district is launching several new programs this fall. One is for dental assistants, to expand the range of services they can provide, including such tasks as filling cavities. Another is an environmental academy to train military veterans for entry-level jobs in environmental fields such as water resources. The district also plans to begin a digital home technology program this winter to train installation technicians for home electronics, security, and Internet equipment.

The district operates Spokane Community College and Spokane Falls Community College, as well as the Institute for Extended Learning.

North Idaho College, meanwhile, has reported record enrollment of 4,856 students, up 4.4 percent from the 4,650 student enrolled last school year. This includes a 7.3 percent increase in the number of freshmen, to 1,685, up from 1,571 last fall.

The college says Internet courses are becoming more popular, with registration for Internet-only courses increasing 12 percent to 2,280 this year, from 2,040 a year earlier.

Contact Jeanne Gustafson at (509) 344-1264 or via e-mail at [jeanneg@spokanejournal.com](mailto:jeanneg@spokanejournal.com).