
MIZZOU

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Around the Columns

Readying campus for a record incoming class

Not since World War II's returning GIs flooded college campuses has MU seen a percentage increase in its freshman

In a one-hour time lapse series of photos, watch as MU freshman move into Respect and Responsibility residence halls on Virginia Avenue Aug. 20.

class as large as the one expected in fall 2008. On opening day Aug. 25, 2008, the University of Missouri welcomed a record-setting 5,812 freshman students. That's a 15.6 percent increase from last year's opening day 5,027 freshman.

Planners all over campus have been hard at work rethinking class schedules, booking more class sections, hiring more faculty, arranging more accommodations, and just generally scrambling to ensure students get the best the university has to offer.

Why the boom? Demographic trends in Missouri and nationwide are providing record numbers of graduating high school seniors in 2008 and 2009. "But even given that, other schools in the state are not showing the same enrollment growth as we are having at MU," says Ann Korschgen, vice provost for enrollment management. "MU offers something special. There's a real synergy here, and that attracts students."

She attributes the increased excitement about MU to a strong array of academic programs (280-plus majors), increased efforts to recruit students (adding recruiters in Illinois and Texas, attending more college fairs, sending more literature), offering top-notch facilities (a beautiful new gym and dorms plus an award-winning landscape), and the national media halo following Mizzou's successful football season last year.

Korschgen is proud not only of the spike in numbers but also of the diversity and intelligence of the incoming class. Numbers of African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians are up, as are out-of-state enrollments. The Honors College, which requires an ACT score of 29 or higher, accepted 16 percent more students than last year. With this crowd of bright and diverse students needing accommodations, the dorms are popping at the seams. To handle the overflow, Residential Life planners have arranged for blocks of rooms at Campus View and Campus Lodge apartments about two miles from MU.

And there's the major matter of educating the record class. Ted Tarkow, associate dean of arts and science, says the demographic bulge forced planners to get creative. Departments all over campus not only have hired more faculty and scheduled more course sections of standard required courses, but also will offer several new general education courses, such as Drama Through Western Music. To take advantage of times when classrooms typically go unused, the university will offer more early (8 a.m.) and late (3 p.m.) courses. "In the business world, you have to do things at 8 a.m. and at 3 p.m., so the new schedule is a great chance for students to become accustomed to performing throughout the day," Tarkow says. "Students are getting a high-quality education here. One of our goals, of course, is to take steps so that we retain a significant number of these new students. One vehicle is the type of curriculum available on a campus as diverse as ours."

Tarkow, who has worked at MU since 1970, has noted Mizzou's rising energy level as the student population grows. "There is a buzz on campus," he says.

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