MU enrollment down in key groups

By Claire Boston
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COLUMBIA — MU's fall 2013 freshman class is shaping up to be second-largest in campus history, but it won't break records for its diversity or high test scores.

A memo Ann Korschgen, vice provost for enrollment management, and Director of Admissions Barbara Rupp sent to administrators, deans, department chairs and others said MU is losing more students to colleges and universities offering larger scholarships than in previous years.

In the memo, Korschgen and Rupp said the largest declines were among the highest achieving students. MU has received 168 fewer deposits from students with ACT scores of 30 or more compared to last year (36 is the highest score), and 83 fewer than in fall 2011.

Director of Financial Aid Nick Prewett said recruiting high-ability students is essential to MU's success.

"Scholarships targeted toward high-ability students really help promote the prestige of the institution and also promote higher graduation rates and higher retention rates," Prewett said. "It's more than just getting students here."

Korschgen said MU doesn't have final information on what schools applicants picked over MU but said guidance counselors have reported more students interested in the University of Alabama than previous years.

Prewett said MU has compared some of its scholarship offerings to those of other Southeastern Conference schools: The University of Arkansas waives out-of-state tuition for any student with an ACT score of 24 or higher and the University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University also offer similar scholarships, he said.
"We saw a large amount of students selecting those options," Prewett said. "Maybe students who previously would have gone in-state or somewhere else are now finding these out-of-state options a little more viable."

Arkansas' in-state rates are slightly lower than MU's, and Prewett said that has attracted some students, particularly those from southern Missouri. MU offers scholarships to students with ACT scores of 27 or higher.

Some of MU's scholarships haven't increased in years, making them less valuable as tuition rises. Prewett said the Curators Scholars Award, which gives $3,500 to in-state students with ACT scores of 28 or higher, hasn't increased in more than 15 years.

"Fifteen years ago that covered the majority of tuition and fees," Prewett said. "Now it covers right about a third of what tuition and fee charges would be at the university."

Prewett said his office has worked with Korschgen to find ways to offer more scholarships. He said some proposals are being sent to Chancellor Brady Deaton for consideration, but budget considerations will determine the timeline and dollar amounts for raising scholarships.

"As far as recruiting and retaining students, the scholarship dollars are really important," Prewett said.

**Demographic data**

Deposits from first-time college students who are black, Hispanic or Asian American have all decreased compared to fall 2012. Black students' deposits fell by the most, with 107 fewer deposits in 2013 compared to 2012.

Applications from Missouri residents were down 675 from 2012. The Korschgen-Rupp memo called the decline "very significant" and attributed the decrease in part due to a decline in high school graduates in Missouri.

Missouri's number of high school graduates peaked in 2009 with about 70,000 graduates, according to data from the College Board. The 2013 high school graduating class in Missouri hovered around 65,000 and is projected to stay at that number for several years. Despite declining numbers of graduates, Education Week ranked Missouri's graduation rate of 80.7 percent as the eighth-best in the nation.
Korschgen said both Missouri graduation rates and scholarship dollars have contributed to the smaller class size. The fall 2013 freshman enrollment is expected to be just under 6,200, behind the fall 2012 freshman class of 6,501 students.

"We are theorizing that both demographics — the continuing decline in high school graduates in the Midwest — and the emerging and aggressive competition from other flagships who are offering excellent scholarships are both affecting somewhat the enrollment numbers of all students," Korschgen said in an email.

Non-residents submitted 1,084 more applications from 2012 to 2013, but deposits fell by 61. Compared with 2011 deposits, they are still up by 423. Deposits from Illinois and Texas, two states where MU recruits heavily, were down from last year.

Deposits in nearly all colleges and divisions fell. Only the Trulaske College of Business, the College of Human Environmental Sciences and the School of Health Professions saw an increase in deposits.

"We have to keep all this in perspective — we will still have the second or third largest class in our history and we have been the fastest growing university in the Association of American Universities for several years — so the enrollment this fall will still be something to celebrate," Korschgen said.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
MU med school looks to fill rural doc shortage

COLUMBIA, Mo. • A new study shows that University of Missouri medical students who spend time in rural communities while in school are more likely to start their careers away from big cities.

Researchers led by Dr. Kevin Kane, of the medical school's family and community medicine department, interviewed nearly 230 participants in the summer program. They found that those participants were also more likely to choose family practice in residency training. The study covered the program's first 15 years.

Students in the university's Rural Track Pipeline Program receive four to eight weeks of clinical training in a rural community during the summer between their first two years of medical school.

The study is being published in the August edition of Academic Medicine, the Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges.