

Frosh honors program is a real mind-stretcher

By Mary Jo Fitzl

The UNL freshman honors program gives students an "opportunity to stretch their minds," according to Mary Cunningham, honors program coordinator.

The program offers honors and advanced placement courses in nine departments to students showing above average ability in various subject areas.

Honors courses are offered in accounting, agriculture, chemistry, economics, English, French, mathematics, philosophy, and political science. Freshmen are sent invitations by their respective colleges to enroll in the honors courses in which they have demonstrated special ability.

Advanced placement courses are those that put freshmen students in sophomore level courses.

This summer, 1,098 invitations were mailed to 503 students along with their registration packets. High school records, entrance test scores, interest in the subject and fulfillment of the college's requirements are considered in selecting honors students.

More than one course

Some students receive invitations to more than one honors course. Cunningham said most of the students invited accept at least one of the invitations.

The Office of Admissions and Advising issues the invitations. Small classes, the opportunity to explore independent study and instruction by outstanding faculty members are some of the advantages of honors courses, she said.

"The faculty is genuinely concerned with the students," Cunningham said. Because many of the honors courses are discussion oriented, students can easily develop a one-to-one relationship with the faculty. "They get terribly excited to work with such bright young people," she said.

Honors courses have a maximum of 30 to 35 students enrolled in each section. The amount of sections offered per course varies with the demand for the class.

"The honors program is a self-selection process," Cunningham said. "Students fit the class into their schedule if they have room."

No student who is invited is kept from enrolling in an honors course, although the Admissions and Advising Office gives special attention to the student carrying more than two honors courses a semester. "We don't want to overload students," Cunningham said.

College programs accelerated

The nature of the material in an honors course allows students to accelerate their college programs. Robert Raymond, Accounting Dept. chairman, said honors courses work well for students who are well-disciplined in study. This discipline gives them more time for electives and independent study.

"Honors courses are an experience in being a self-starter," he said.

"None of the honors courses are easier than the regular classes," Cunningham said.

Student response to freshman honors courses seems to be favorable, according to Professor Robert Audi, Philosophy Dept. chairman. Students in his department's honors courses generally regard the classes as "challenging, helpful and not too difficult," he said.

"We feel that honors students come out in pretty good shape and react positively to the honors courses," said Dr. David Brooks, freshman chemistry coordinator. "Honors courses allow the material to be taught at a higher level than the regular offerings," he said.

Few have difficulty

Raymond said the majority of the students feel it is "a fine thing to be advanced placed." He said he expects two or three students to have difficulty with the material.

Students are advised to drop back to the regular level course if the honors material becomes too difficult to handle, Cunningham explained.

The Office of Admissions and Advising depends a lot on word of mouth and contact with high school counselors to inform high school students of the UNL honors program, she said. Cunningham added that some of the program's best promotion comes from those students who are familiar with the freshman honors courses and spread the word at their former high schools.

Assistant housing director joins administrative exodus

This year's exodus of UNL administrators continues as Assistant Director of Housing Ken Swerdlow leaves Sept. 17.

Swerdlow, assistant director since August 1972, has accepted the position of housing director at Bemidji (Minn.) State University.

"Leaving UNL will be bittersweet for me. Being a director of housing is important for my career and that's the sweet part," he said.

"I loved it here at UNL. My family and I both liked Lincoln and (leaving) that will be the bitter part."

He added that he is moving because of his career. Although Bemidji only has an enrollment of 6,000, Swerdlow said he "would receive a healthy increase in pay."

Swerdlow was notified Aug. 20 of his new job, and a search committee has been formed to fill his position. He said the committee will start a national search that may take months.

Betsy Plum, coordinator of programs for housing, will serve as acting assistant director.

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