Computer use demand up, officials say

By Kimberly Vavrina
Staff Reporter

Even though UNL has 50 percent fewer computer science majors than in 1982, the department offers more classes, graduates more students, and is expanding its computer systems.

Roy Keller, chairman of the computer science department, said UNL has about 500 computer science majors, compared with about 1,000 in 1982, a peak enrollment for the department. Yet, today, twice as many students finish the program and graduate, he said.

Despite the decline in computer science majors, UNL offers about 10 percent more classes than in 1982, Keller said, and the department still fails to meet student demand for courses. This is mainly because of staff shortage and more students enrolling in computer classes, he said.

Today, Keller said, "people realize they don't have to major in computer science to learn about computers."

Keller compared students' desire to learn about computers and majoring in computer science with people wanting to learn to drive and studying automotive mechanics.

Douglas Gale, director of the Computer Resource Center, said that computer use on campus is "steady and aggressive," and that UNL uses all of its systems.

Gale said that computer use at UNL expands to use all of the available equipment.

"We're in the position of throwing a handful of food to a hungry mob," he said.

In order to meet demand for computers, the NU Board of Regents approved two new systems in December.

The computers are the Harris H 1200 and the 4381. The Harris H 1200 has 5.5 million instructions per second (MIPS), and the 4381 has 4.5 MIPS. MIPS is a measure of a computer's power.

The Harris H 1200 will be used by the engineering department for simulated designs, by the computer science department and by a small group of users that run large programs.

The 4381 will be used by the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources on East Campus, by administration and for general academic purposes.

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