Undergrad Enrollment Down in ’03-’04
By Elisabeth Clemmer  Staff Writer
The economy is bad. Mennonites are notoriously cheap. As might be expected, new student enrollment at EMU dropped more than 10 percent at the start of the 2003-04 school year. While visible signs of economic instability can be observed in escalating gas prices, (although Virginia hardly suffers from gas prices compared to Pennsylvania) they also manifest in the number of students starting at EMU this fall, which is down to 197 from last year’s 213.
Undergraduate enrollment peaked in 1998. Since then, there has been a slight but perceptible downward trend. It appears that the economy is the most obvious culprit of this decline.
"Generally in a low economy, community colleges and state schools prosper while private ones do not," said Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing, Shirley Yoder.
More recently significant is the drop of returning and transfer students, contributing to a noteworthy deficit. EMU has been renowned in the past for its large community of transfer students.

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Director of Residence Life Ellen Miller said the housing lottery last March was the first indicator of a possible waning number of returning students. The lottery ended with seven rooms left vacant in Roselawn and leaving no choice but to close off the entire first floor of Oakwood. Such drastic measures have never been taken before.
While undergraduate enrollment at EMU is slowly on the decline, the graduate and seminary programs continue to soar in numbers. The seminary is attracting an influx of students varying in age and background. The graduate and MBA programs continue to flourish as well, despite a lack of interest among current undergraduates.

Other major Mennonite colleges have not experienced a similar drop this year, though it is unusual for the college choice of Mennonite high school graduates to swing between Goshen and EMU from year to year. Apparently Goshen is preferred among the class of ’03.
The Admissions office’s ‘Campaign Virginia’ continues to target local Virginians of various non-Mennonite backgrounds and close proximity. Employed by the admissions office, junior Katrina Martin will spend another semester of devoting two nights a week to making phone calls in search of potentially interested high school students.
"Some people have never heard of us until we call and then they become interested by what we have to say. So however we can get our name out there and get info to them is great," Martin said.
It would be an overstatement to say that EMU is in an enrollment crisis, but the apprehension is lurking nearby. Perhaps the 13,870 alumni in all 50 states and three U.S. territories have neglected to send their own children here, or failed to promote how conducive to learning mountains and waterfalls really are, but the overriding theme is, as Miller said, that the majority of students here really want to be. Students have high expectations of a Christian university and will continue to come for that reason."

Hesston Transition to Become Smoother
By Jenna Martin  Staff Writer

Thanks to a new agreement between EMU and Hesston College, Hesston transfer students need never again worry whether their Hesston classes will fit into EMU’s curriculum. EMU and the Kansas institution have signed an articulation agreement that formalizes that graduates of Hesston College coming to EMU with Associates of Arts and Science degrees will be enrolled as juniors. They will be considered to have met the general education courses required of EMU underclassmen. Hesston alumni will also receive priority in cross-cultural experiences. The agreement takes affect for the Hesston College class of 2004.
In the past, Hesston transfers have had to take introductory classes at EMU with younger students. Undergraduate Academic Dean Marie Morris had to take the Kansas institution to court to receive a decision to accommodate Hesston students.
"Now transfers will be considered to have met these underclassmen requirements," said Morris. "Juniors will be able to take higher level courses with their peers."

Hesston alumni in all 50 states and three U.S. territories will receive credit for classes they received at Hesston College. An additional 13,870 alumni in all 50 states and three U.S. territories are lurking nearby. Perhaps the idea of a Christian university is swaying between Goshen and EMU from year to year. Apparently Goshen is preferred among the class of ‘03.
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