

Online courses see increase in popularity

by Kristen Shea, April 6, 2010

As summer approaches, college students prepare for long days under the sun or punching time clocks for their part-time jobs. But during the past several years, enrollment for Elon University online classes has grown in popularity.

Taking online courses during the summer allows for learning in a flexible manner, some students say. But some prospective enrollers say they are skeptical about whether the online course will be just as effective as a classroom course. The desire for a genuine personal interaction with peers and professors may make these programs less ideal for students.

Registrar Mark Albertson said he feels as though the online programs are effective.

"The courses have grown a lot in the last 10 years," Albertson said. "Last year the numbers plateaued, and I think the economy had something to do with that."

Elon adopted the use of online courses eight years ago, and the number of participants has been growing since. According to Albertson, the university began with about 20 courses, which grew to 30, and now there are about 45 courses with 12 to 13 available spots in each.

For summer 2010, Albertson said there would be no change from the past couple of years, and roughly 1,300 students will be enrolled in summer online courses. He said these online courses have become significantly more popular to students because they aid in the quest for a four-year college experience with no additional time, and perhaps even shorten students' time at school.

"It's not hard to graduate in four years...and you could even graduate in less than that while saving yourself some money in the process of these summer courses," Albertson said.

In terms of monetary issues, one may think additional courses yield additional costs. But according to Albertson, the classes are far from expensive.

"Costs are reasonable when compared to tuition of the spring and fall," Albertson said. "If you factor in the costs for fall and spring courses, the online ones aren't bad at all. I think what's good is you get classes out of the way, and if you attend Winter Term, you can set yourself up for a good senior year."

Online classes cost \$380 per credit, and a four-credit course is \$1,520.

Albertson said he has not heard from a student who claims to not have gotten their money's worth. He said he has actually heard the complete opposite.

"I think the classes are very thorough and students have enjoyed them," Albertson said. "That's why we've had such an increase in numbers."