MSU Engineering enrollment tops 1,000 women undergraduates

A first! The Michigan State University College of Engineering will have more than 1,000 women students, from freshmen to seniors, in the college this autumn.

The upward trend follows the college’s overall enrollment increase in the past several years.

“This fall we are welcoming one of the largest classes of freshman students in more than 25 years, with women students comprising nearly one-quarter of the incoming class,” said MSU Engineering Dean Leo Kempel.

“These are exciting times in the college. The college is well on its way to becoming one of the fastest rising engineering programs in the nation,” Kempel added.

The College of Engineering’s 2015–16 official enrollment figures won’t be available until October, but officials estimate they welcomed more than 1,400 incoming students at the Freshman Colloquium on Tuesday, Sept. 1, in the Breslin Center. Among those 1,400 incoming students are more than 300 women freshmen.

The college’s current enrollment is around 5,000 undergraduate students and more than 800 graduate students.

In 2013, the college brought in its largest entering class in 25 years when it welcomed 1,300 undergraduates to campus. That record was shattered in the fall of 2014, when the college welcomed 1,400 freshmen including 260 women—one of the largest groups of women to enter the college in decades. This year, the college is on track to surpass that mark.

Recruitment efforts engage the staffs in the college’s K–12 Outreach, Diversity Programs, and Women in Engineering offices.

Four who are focused on strengthening the number of women students in the college are Teresa Isela VanderSloot, director for women in engineering recruitment and K–12 outreach, her assistant director Geralynn Phelps, and Judy Cordes, director for student success, and her assistant director Sandra Christlieb.

VanderSloot said the recruitment/retention team are optimistic they will set new enrollment standards in 2015–16. “We’re on track for the freshman class to be more than 20 percent female,” she added.

The college’s female enrollment in 2014-2015 was about 18 percent of undergraduates. The college’s overall goal is to have an undergraduate population that is 25 percent female by 2020.

“Young women want to make a difference in the world, rather than solely focusing on course content,” said VanderSloot. “Our job is to help them get comfortable with the idea of being a Spartan Engineer,” she added.

Cordes explained that she and Christlieb work with current students and others to support women in engineering activities. “We work collectively to bring more women into MSU Engineering, and then join forces to keep them here. A little support goes a long way,” Cordes said.

“We find that fostering personal connections and student achievement through mentoring, peer-led opportunities, and leadership techniques work well for our students. We offer formal and informal mentoring sessions, special events, and even ‘brain breaks’ to help students connect,” she continued.
“Working with the students is always our ‘added bonus.’”

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