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# Georgia Southern's CIT projecting enrollment surge

*AUGUST 15, 2007*

Across the country, colleges are enrolling fewer students who plan to pursue a computer science degree. While other institutions ponder the tech-world brain drain, Georgia Southern University is welcoming record numbers of potential majors.

"We're projecting a 25 percent increase in potential computer science and technology majors," said James Bradford, dean of the University's College of Information Technology (CIT). He based the projection on data from surveys of incoming freshmen attending University SOAR (Student Orientation and Registration) sessions.

"Declining enrollments across the country have the potential to create a national crisis in the computer and high tech industry," Bradford stated. "A number of organizations are planning national meetings to discuss this very topic."

According to the Computing Research Association, prospective students' interest in computer science as a major fell 70 percent between 2000 and 2005.

Given the importance of computer-related disciplines to business and industry, Bradford said he is pleased that the College's new recruitment strategy is bucking the national trend.

"Once we identify potential students, we offer them a lot of individual attention," said Bradford. "We hold special information sessions for students who express an interest in a CIT discipline to learn about their career hopes and dreams. In addition, we send individual e-mails to see if anyone needs more information from us."

Based upon early data, the strategy appears successful. Four years ago, the College was established as one of the first in the nation dedicated to Information Technology. At the time, Bradford said the goal was to grow enrollment by 10 percent a year. However, Bradford said he and his staff were not going to be complacent.

"We're reaching a point as a university where we have to compete for students, much like businesses compete for customers," said Bradford. "We knew that if we were going to address the needs of the high tech industry that we'd have to try new strategies."

Taking a novel approach also applies to the College's curriculum.

Using information collected from small focus groups of students from several years, Bradford said the College is exploring "boutique style" educational options.

'We're considering adding a focus on cyber forensics and information security as well as a focus on entrepreneurship recently added in information systems. These courses of study will prepare our students for rewarding and challenging careers in an ever-changing environment," stated Bradford.

In a relatively short period of time, CIT has established Georgia Southern University as a leading high tech institution in the region, Bradford said.

Established in 2003, Georgia Southern's CIT consists of three academic departments: Computer Sciences, Information Systems and Information Technology. The college is housed in a \$33 million state-of-the-art facility featuring 25 interactive learning/study rooms, 10 computer labs and 14 electronic classrooms. Students have the opportunity to work on real-world projects through the college's own software company Eagle Informatics. Its client list includes regional and national companies such as NCR.

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