Heavy load does not hurt GPA, UASSO study shows

By Laura Farhie

After a study revealed students with heavy academic loads achieve higher academic performance than students with average course loads, the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) dropped consideration of a 48-unit limit on freshman loads.

The study was performed by Peggy Richardson, Executive Officer of the Undergraduate Academic Support Office (UASSO).

"The study is in no way complete, and the figures are not statistically significant," stressed Richardson. She urged students not to conclude they will have a higher academic performance if they take more units. "There is no cause and effect relationship here," she claimed.

Students with academic loads over 59 units had mean grade point averages (GPA) of 4.1 to 4.3, while students registered for 45 to 48 units had mean GPA's of 3.7 to 4.1. The figures, obtained from the Registrar's Office, were taken from students in the Classes of '81 through '83 in Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and Physics.

Freshmen registered for over 57 units in the fifth week of the term were less likely to receive a grade of C or below in math and physics than freshmen registered for 42 to 56 units. Freshmen with over 59 units were less likely to receive an F or an Incomplete and were more likely to pass over 45 units than freshmen with 42 to 56 units. These results are based on Richardson's study of 223 randomly selected freshmen in the Class of '84.

"Freshmen who take high [academic] loads do not drop as many courses as people thought," said Richardson. Only 21 percent of the freshmen with over 57 units dropped a subject after the fifth week of the term.

Sixteen percent of the freshmen taking more than 57 units received an F or an incomplete, compared to 23 percent of those who registered for 42-56 units. Forty-two percent of freshmen registered for over 57 units received a C or below, compared to 25 percent of those who registered for 42-56 units.

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