Frosh Receive Housing Spots

By Sarah Y. Keightley

The Student Center Athenaeum cluster was bustling with activity yesterday evening as small groups of freshmen gave out happy cries and disappointed groans. They had just received their dormitory assignments, and another 44 will have to wait until the second round of the housing lottery, according to Assistant Dean of Residence and Campus Activities Andrew M. 444.

Math Test Scores Drop, while Essay Rises

By Stacey E. Blau

Forty-eight percent of the freshmen who took the Freshman Essay Evaluation received satisfactory scores, up by 9 percent from last year, according to Coordinator for the Writing Requirement Leslie C. Perelman. However, the number of students passing the Pre-Calculus Mathematics Diagnostic Exam dropped by 9 percent to 49 percent, according to Peggy S. Enderle, associate dean of undergraduate academic affairs.

"The general consensus was that [the math exam] was harder, reflected in both the lower scores and the increased length of time students needed to complete the exam," said Professor of Mathematics Arthur P. Mattuck, who wrote both this year’s and last year’s mathematics exams. The exams, administered each year to freshmen and transfer students, are used as gauges of students’ abilities in expository writing and pre-calculus skills.

Essay topics: difficulty, diversity

Of the 1032 students who took the essay evaluation, 48 percent, or 493 students, passed the exam, Perelman said. Thirty-six students, or 3 percent, passed conditionally—meaning that they will have to attend a two-hour workshop to review the minor flaws in their essays. An additional 401, or 39 percent, received a score of “not acceptable” because they did not show proficiency in expository writing. The remaining 100 students, or 10 percent, received a score of “just acceptable—subject recommend,” meaning that the students could immediately from taking a writing subject but are not required to do so.

The two-hour essay test consisted of a narrative and an argumentative essay, the same format as last year. The narrative essay offered students the choice of two topics: to describe a situation in which they encountered a difficulty with frequency and how they resolved it, or to tell about an experience they had with people different from themselves and what they learned from it.

The argumentative question, which only had one possible topic, focused on the issue of pirated software on computer networks.

"Designing these questions is not an easy task given the constraints we have," Perelman said. "The questions must be accessible to 1100 diverse students. I am always on the lookout for questions for next year.”

Triangometry worst area

The math diagnostic exam highlighted weaknesses that students may have with pre-calculus skills.

8.01 Changes Format To Smaller Lectures

By Daniel C. Stevenson

8.01 (6.01), a course taken by approximately 600 freshmen in the fall term, was extensively changed this past summer, according to Professor of Physics Wit Busza, designer of the new course. The lecture and recitation system was restructured, and a new 300-page study guide was written by Busza and Professor Susan Cartwright of Sheffield University in England, to reflect a model used at Princeton University.

Instead of three large lectures and two recitations each week, students will attend two small lectures of 16 students and one large lecture for all of the students. Busza will teach the large lecture, which will include demonstrations and provide "a little bit of a global philosophical coda" for the course.

Another difference is the new course will not have any graded homework problems, Busza said. "Instead, we monitor your progress through short weekly quizzes which contribute to your final grade," he said.

"The basic idea is that you are in charge of your own learning, while we provide you with the help and resources you will need," Busza said. "This way, students can structure the course to take maximum advantage of what they already know and concentrate on material that is new and difficult, he said. 

Another difference is the amount of help available for students. Busza said. Along with the extensive hints and solved problems in the study guide, "every Thursday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. a course of teaching assistants and faculty will be available to help students with any questions," he said. Students are also encouraged...