Gearing up for growth



Clemson finalizing long-term plan for undergrad increase

BY ERIC SPROTT
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CLEMSON — While Clemson University has experienced a boom with a significant increase in the number of freshman applications it has received compared to this time a year ago, current plans call for roughly the same number of acceptance letters to be mailed out again this year.

Change is coming, however, as the school is working to finalize a plan that will call for an overall increase of 15 to 20 percent in the undergraduate student body over the next decade.

Chuck Knepfle, Clemson's associate vice president for enrollment management, said he's wrapping up work on a 10-year enrollment plan that will significantly increase undergraduate enrollment, which cur-

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tional championship ease in applications

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rently stands at more than 16,000 students.

"This marks a slowdown from the 30 percent growth Clemson experienced over the prior 10 years," he said. "However, we are holding the planned size of the fall 2017 freshman class steady from last year so that we can focus on preparing the campus for the growth.

"We will see where we stand after the fall 2017 group comes back from summer and then develop a plan for fall 2018 freshman class size."

Robert Barkley, the school's director of undergraduate admissions, said the school is looking to keep the upcoming freshman class to roughly 3,600 students — similar to the number who entered during the current school year.

Barkley said as of Feb. 10, Clemson had received 25,162 freshman applications — an 11 percent increase over the 22,763 applications received through the same time a year ago.

To reach the roughly 3,600-student mark — given many students will inevitably go to other schools besides Clemson — 11,628 acceptance letters have been mailed out.

And while the number of applications could easily be attributed to the Clemson football team's run to the national championship, Barkley noted that's actually not the case.

Instead, he pointed to the Tigers' run to the championship game during the 2015 season, when they fell to Alabama before getting their revenge against the Crimson Tide on Jan. 9 to capture the program's first national title since 1981.

"We were ahead of this time last year on the first of December," he said. "This 2,500-application increase has stayed with us since before the national championship, and I think some of this is (the team's 2015) run.

"Our priority deadline is Dec. 1. At that point, we hadn't even played the ACC Championship game, much less what was to come after that."

In addition to the national attention brought to the school by the football team, Barkley also pointed to the school's rising academic reputation and its involvement in a national application consortium that makes colleges more accessible to students everywhere.

Add in the boost that's expected from the Tigers winning the national title, and the school can expect to better this year's application total in the first year it could begin to expand the student body.

"For 2018, we may see a further carry-on from this year's national championship," Barkley said. "But obviously this year was tremendous from the national exposure and everything you get from it."

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