Enrollment growth faces challenges

By Jeff Sklar

The UA faces wide-ranging challenges in determining how its student body should look as it moves into an era of less control over which applicants it may admit and reject, a top UA official in charge of overseeing enrollment told the Faculty Senate yesterday.

The challenges relate to shaping a student body that meets the university’s characteristics, based on the university’s mission, while automatically accepting fewer students who meet minimum GPA and standardized test requirements.

That mission, which President Peter Likins has defined as Focused Excellence, involves becoming more selective while prioritizing diversity.

Likins has said the UA can’t handle a student body larger than about 40,000, as space constraints prevent the campus from increasing its student body.

But as the number of Arizona high school graduates grows — likely by 20 percent in less than 10 years — deciding who those 40,000 students are becomes increasingly important.

For example, Ota said, the UA might consider decreasing the size of its freshmen class from 6,000 to 5,000, while increasing the number of students it accepts as transfers from almost 2,000 to nearly 3,000.

It might also try to increase its graduate student enrollment, which sits now at about 22 percent of total enrollment, to somewhere closer to the national average of 30 percent.

Whether the university implements such policies depends on how community members define the ideal culture of the institution.

The UA’s racial makeup will also play a critical role in shaping its enrollment. As the university slowly seeks to increase its Hispanic enrollment to 25 percent of its total student body, and Asian enrollment to 10 percent, the student body falls below the 25th percentile for minority enrollment.