TUSCALOOSA, Ala. -- A basic knowledge of computers can be just as useful to students majoring in music or medicine as it is to those studying business or computer science. That sums up the premise behind the University of Alabama's Computer Based Honors Program.

The program is unlike any offered at other universities in that it teaches students how they can apply computer technology to their chosen profession, whatever it may be. The students who join the program have a wide variety of interests because the primary focus of the program is on using the computer as a tool for all kinds of research--not just computer science.

David Wicks, a freshman pre-med student from Tuscaloosa, said he applied for admission into the program because he knew that a basic knowledge of computers would "give him an edge" in the job market.

"Computers are used in almost every aspect of American society," he explained. "No matter what field or profession you decide to go into, a prior knowledge of computers can give you an edge over someone who hasn't been taught how to use them."

Robert Lingle, a physics major from Pascagoula, Miss. said the program would enable him to be more versatile when he graduates from college and enters the job market. "I'll have my physics degree plus a good in-depth knowledge of computers, and that ought to help me advance faster than someone who only has a degree in physics," he reasoned.

Students who enter the Computer Based Honors Program begin by taking a highly accelerated freshman course. The course requires no prior experience in working with (more)
Students learn basic computer languages, basic computer concepts and how to use the computer in problem-solving.

Marsha King, a freshman engineering student from Frisco City, was one of five students selected to receive a $1,700 scholarship offered to freshmen entering the program.

"A prior knowledge of computers wasn't necessary to get into the program," Ms. King notes. "I never had the opportunity to work with computers before, but I was enthusiastic about learning something new. "The program is hard, but I feel that it will really be worth all the effort when I graduate from school," she added.

About 50 students at the University of Alabama are enrolled in the program, according to Dr. Cathy Randall, interim director of the Computer Based Honors Program. "Five fellowships are available to freshman students entering the program each year," she said.

"After we review the applications, up to 20 semi-finalists are invited to come to the University for two days of interviews and other activities. A selection committee of faculty members and students name five fellowship winners by late spring."

All semi-finalists are automatically invited to participate in the program whether or not they receive fellowships, Ms. Randall noted.

For more information about the University of Alabama's Computer Based Honors Program, write to: Computer Based Honors Program, Box 803, University, Ala., 35486 or call (205) 348-5029.

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