sciences at Barnard has decreased. But compared to national trends Barnard College is ahead, he said. In 1975, a national poll indicated that 10% of all first-year students intended to major in science, by 1984 that figure had plummeted to 6.6%. Barnard felt the effects of this decline but is recovering more quickly than many other schools, said McLaughey.

Regardless of a drop from 30 biology majors at Barnard in 1986 to 25 this year, Hertz believes there is an increasing interest in biology at Barnard. Last year 180 students enrolled in Barnard’s introductory course in biology, this year the number increased to 250, signalling a renewed interest in biology, said Hertz, Chair of the department.

According to a recent grant proposal put together by the various science departments at Barnard, “Barnard’s science departments continue to attract and retain students in numbers.”

In the Environmental Science Department, typically six or seven students have registered for the course “Measurements and Cycles,” a class with a primarily scientific orientation. This year enrollment is up to 15, according to Environmental Science Department Chair Richard Bopp. Enrollment in “Environmental Case Studies,” a more socially oriented course, has skyrocketed from 12 students last year to 45 students this year.

And in each of the last three first-year classes, over 40% of the students have indicated their intention to major in science. Hertz said you can expect half of those students to graduate as science majors.

Accommodating the Growing Interest in the Sciences

Expansion in Barnard’s biology, growing interest in the field is by restructuring the curricula and increasing the number of courses offered. In response to the increasing enrollment in the introductory biology course, for instance, the department is restructuring the course’s curriculum. Until now, there has been one introductory biology course offered to both students with strong science backgrounds and to students merely trying to complete their science requirement. Now students will choose between two tracks. One track will be designed for non-science majors and will stress science’s relationship to daily life. The other track will be geared toward science and pre-med majors.

However, Hertz said, “[the first track] is not the baby science track...it’s not watered down; it’s just not geared for whizzes in biology.”

Although there currently are only two physics majors and two astronomy majors, the Barnard Barnard Physics Department also is expanding its offerings — perhaps in an effort to attract more students to the major. Both Professor Root and Professor Timothy Halpin-Healy are the latest additions to the physics department, and according to Root, the department currently is searching for a third full-time professor.

Until this year, all physics courses, except introductory courses for non-majors, were taught at Columbia College.

“Part of our goal is to let women know that it is no big deal for a woman to be a chemist.”

Barnard Chemistry Department Chair Leslie Lessinger

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